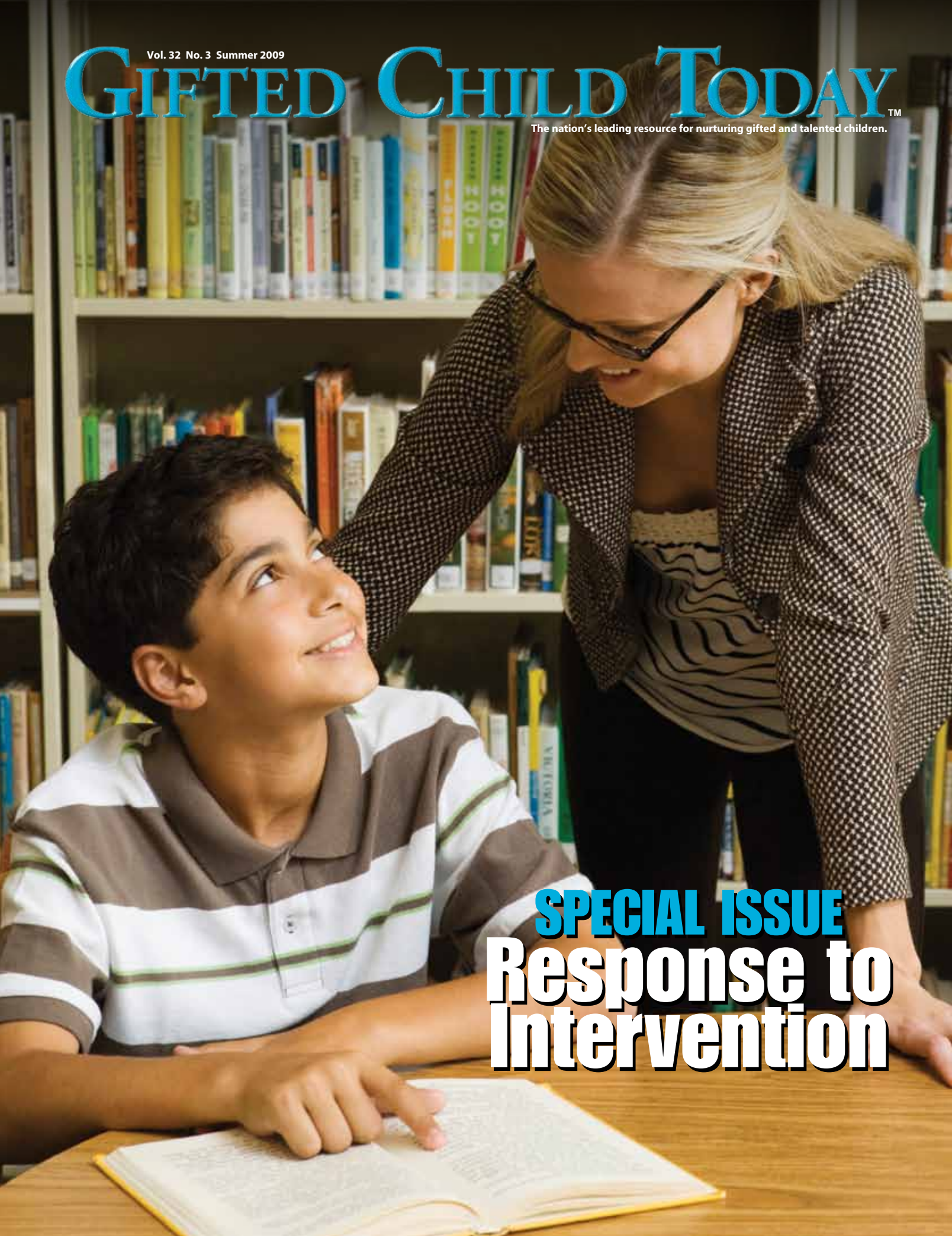


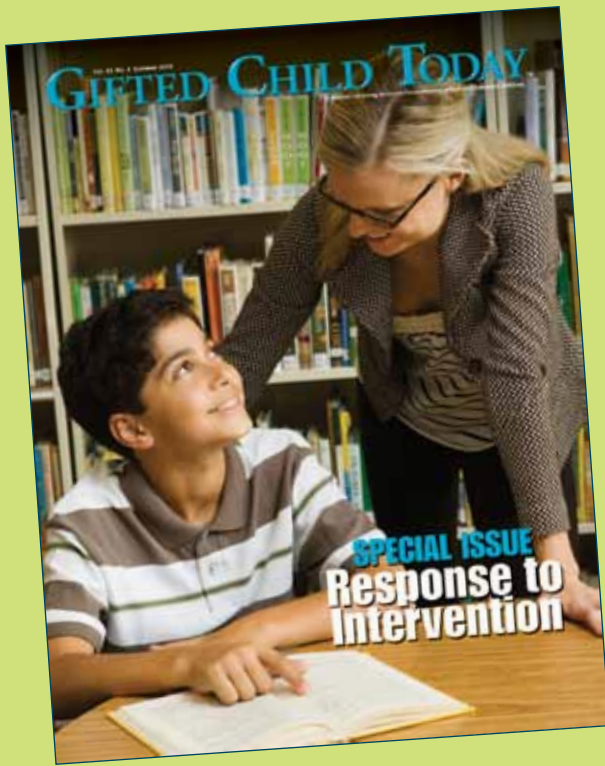
GIFTED CHILD TODAY™

Vol. 32 No. 3 Summer 2009

The nation's leading resource for nurturing gifted and talented children.



SPECIAL ISSUE
**Response to
Intervention**



GIFTED CHILD TODAY

Ideal for teachers and administrators seeking effective, research-based information

Gifted Child Today offers timely information about teaching and parenting gifted and talented children. The journal provides critical information for teachers and administrators involved with gifted children. *Gifted Child Today* includes articles about topics such as teaching strategies in gifted education, building a more effective gifted and talented program, and working with gifted children with learning disabilities. *Gifted Child Today* also offers thought-provoking articles for parents of gifted and talented children.

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- **Gifted Education and Cooperative Learning: A Miss or a Match?**

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features

Meeting the Needs of Gifted Students Within an RtI Framework

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RtI for Nurturing Giftedness: Implications for the RtI School-Based Team

Claire E. Hughes and Karen Rollins

Response to Intervention and Twice-Exceptional Learners: A Promising Fit

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Policy Implications at the State and District Level With RtI for Gifted Students

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Remaining Challenges for the Use of RtI With Gifted Education

Claire E. Hughes, Karen Rollins, Susan K. Johnsen, Daphne A. Pereles, Stuart Omdal, Lois Baldwin, Elissa F. Brown, Sherry H. Abernethy, and Mary Ruth Coleman.

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From the Classroom

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*Claire E. Hughes, Ph.D.,
and Mary Ruth Coleman, Ph.D.*

Response to Intervention Special Issue

Gifted education cannot thrive in a vacuum; it must be a viable and vibrant part of the overall educational endeavor. As part of the endeavor, gifted education must be responsive to current trends and issues impacting all children. This does not mean that every new idea becomes the “flavor” of the month, but it does mean that we as a field must be aware of major trends and issues and reflect on how the larger educational picture impacts students who are gifted. By being proactive as new educational initiatives emerge, we help ensure that we as a field are not isolated.

This special issue, which focuses on Response to Intervention (RtI), was undertaken in the spirit of proactive reflection on how gifted education and the needs of gifted students fit with an educational reform that is sweeping the country. In this issue we focus on the emerging possibilities and the remaining challenges for gifted education as RtI moves forward. We have tried to balance theory, practice, and policy to present a well-rounded view of what we know and need to know about the implications of RtI for gifted learners.

The opening article, “Meeting the Needs of Gifted Students Within an RtI Framework,” by Mary Ruth Coleman and Claire E. Hughes, offers an overview of what the key components of RtI might look like for gifted students and students with high potential who have not yet been formally identified. The second article, “RtI Models for Gifted Students,” by Karen Rollins, Chrystyna V. Mursky, Sneha Shah-Coltrane, and Susan K. Johnsen, describes several models for the use of RtI with gifted children that are emerging across the country. These descriptions show

how the theories move into practice under a variety of circumstances. Next, we include an article focused on school and classroom practices, “RtI for Nurturing Giftedness: Implications for the RtI School-Based Team,” by Claire E. Hughes and Karen Rollins. This practical application shows what RtI could accomplish if implemented with fidelity at the school and classroom levels.

With the fourth article, “Response to Intervention and Twice-Exceptional Learners: A Promising Fit,” by Daphne A. Pereles, Stuart Omdal, and Lois Baldwin, we take a close look at how the use of RtI, which began as an alternative approach to identifying students with learning disabilities, works for students who are twice-exceptional. The article shares a case story to illustrate how RtI might impact a child who is twice-exceptional by showing the possibilities for earlier supports and services to set children on a trajectory for success. Next, we take a look at policy issues in “Policy Implications at the State and District Level With RtI for Gifted Students,” by Elissa F. Brown and Sherry H. Abernethy. This paper offers solid guidance for decision makers faced with the implications of using RtI approaches with gifted students. Finally, we take a look at the “Remaining Challenges for the Use of RtI With Gifted Education,” with an article by Claire E. Hughes, Karen Rollins, Susan K. Johnsen, Daphne A. Pereles, Stuart Omdal, Lois Baldwin, Elissa F. Brown, Sherry H. Abernethy, and Mary Ruth Coleman.

We hope that this special issue will be useful to the field as we explore together the possibilities of RtI for gifted learners. **GCT**

on the web

The Vienna Vegetable Orchestra <http://www.gemueseorchester.org>

When you attend a classical music concert, usually you see strings, winds, brass, and percussion instruments, but imagine listening and seeing an orchestra whose musicians only use vegetables as instruments! Fresh produce bought at local markets are drilled and shaped into instruments that create a “musically and aesthetically unique sound universe.” A bell pepper is transformed into a trumpet, carrots are made into recorders, leeks are used as violins, and an eggplant becomes an aubergine clap. The Vienna Vegetable Orchestra now plays all over the world and serves vegetable soup after concerts. Visit this Web site to find out more about this unique ensemble and view shopping, preparation, and footage of a live show.

The Federal Reserve Today <http://www.federalreserveeducation.org/fed101/index.htm?CFID=4614824&CFTOKEN=71041915>

What is monetary policy? What is Ben Bernanke’s job as chairman of the Federal Reserve? This Web site explores the history and structure of the Federal Reserve, as well as monetary policy, banking supervision, and financial services dealing with the Federal Reserve. Find out more about the life of a check or dollar bill. Classroom guides, as well as an informational video entitled, “The Fed Today,” are available here.

Measurement Conversions <http://www.convert-me.com/en>

This Web site makes life a lot easier when making online conversions for many measurement systems. Conversions in mass and weight, distance and length, capacity and volume, area, weight to volume, cooking, temperature, and fuel economy are all made easy with this site. Conversion tables for both common units (U.S., metric) and exotic units, such as the ones of

Elementary School Foreign Language Instruction

Over the past decade, foreign language instruction at the elementary level has declined (Zehr, M. A. [2009]. Elementary foreign-language instruction on descent. *Education Week*, 28[23], 8). Only one in four elementary schools offered foreign language courses in 2008, with Spanish provided in 88% of these schools. Most of the decline is attributed to decreasing budgets and the negative effects from the No Child Left Behind Act, which emphasizes math and English language arts. In spite of the economic downturn, some districts have expanded their offerings through partnerships with universities and federal grants. For example, in Ann Arbor, MI, student teachers from the University of Michigan teach language classes. The U.S. Department of Defense’s Foreign Language Education Program also provides grants of \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 annually to public schools who are interested in teaching Chinese or Arabic. Most often, foreign language programs tend to be in high-income areas and at the high school level so that students have fewer opportunities to become proficient.

Value-Added Scores: Technical Challenges

Traditional ways of assessing teacher quality tend to focus on teacher credentials, experiences, and other types of inputs. On the other hand, value-added measures are based on student achievement or outcomes. More than 300 school districts nationwide have begun to analyze students’ test results to examine the “value added” by the teacher in terms of learning (Rothman, R. [2009]. An inexact science. *Harvard Education Letter*, 25[2], 4–7). In these models, teachers with students who perform better or faster than what might be expected receive higher ratings than teachers with lower performing students. Instead of comparing one cohort of students’ year-end scores to the scores of last year’s cohorts, they examine a student’s growth over the course of a year regardless of where he or she falls in relation to a fixed standard proficiency. The methods for determining the value added in a classroom differ somewhat, but generally assessors calculate an expected trajectory for student improvement for the class by examining the students’ prior levels of achievement and controlling for student background characteristics that are associated with achievement, such as students’ race and ethnicity, socioeconomic levels, and gender. Some of the following challenges with this approach have been identified:

1. *Control factors.* Because it is difficult to isolate a teacher’s effect on student achievement from other factors that lie outside his or her control, such as low socioeconomic status or other background characteristics of the students, teachers and others who are familiar with the students need to be involved. For example, an individual student’s performance may vary based upon an unexpected event such as illness, divorce, death, and so on.

2. *Student assignment to classrooms.* Models are based on a random assignment of students to teachers' classrooms, which often is not possible given different teachers' expertise with different groups of students (e.g., exceptionalities). Moreover, students may be transient and not remain in a teacher's classroom over the course of a year or may switch classrooms within the same school.
3. *Teachers' assignments.* Many teachers do not teach the same subject or the same grade level year after year so that curriculum may vary.
4. *Level of difficulty of the test.* Not all state accountability tests have high-level test items so it is difficult for gifted or high-performing students to increase their scores very much.
5. *Teaching to the test.* Teaching to the test may boost scores for the short term but may not result in long-term learning gains.

Researchers have tried to correct for measurement error by collecting more data over a longer period of time and smoothing out fluctuations and by scaling tests that will yield comparable results. Researchers caution schools that no single measure should be used in making critical decisions about teachers. The bigger question is whether or not such measures really make a difference on classroom instruction and student performance.

Misconceptions About AP Courses

The Advanced Placement (AP) program is intended to provide high school students with content at the level of an introductory college course. Most of these courses cover a breadth of topics, which necessitates sacrificing some depth. In a recent article, Mattimore ([2009]. 5 fundamental misconceptions about AP courses. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 55(22), A33) confronts criticisms that he believes are built on these four myths:

1. *AP is about memorization and does not require students to think critically.* AP exams do require students to learn the basic facts but also require students to build on this knowledge by applying facts, making inferences, and analyzing patterns.
2. *High school teachers lack the expertise to teach college-level classes.* The College Board prepares high school teachers to teach AP subjects and offers hundreds of workshops each year. Moreover, teachers have college textbooks, instructor's manuals, and test banks of exams similar to those provided to college professors.
3. *Awarding college credit reduces chances for wider intellectual exploration in college.* AP allows students to bypass introductory courses that they might not be interested in and broadens the college experience, providing more opportunities for students to delve further in a subject.
4. *College courses provide greater intellectual breadth and depth than AP courses.* Introductory college courses are typically large lecture classes

on the web

the Ancient Greek and Roman, are provided for use.

Chem4Kids.com

http://www.chem4kids.com/files/elem_pertable.html

This is a great site for the emerging chemist! The periodic table is color-coded and explained. An explanation for each element is provided, including the number of electrons in the outer shell, the atomic number, and the atomic mass. Different scenarios of each particular element bonding with another element are discussed. A wav file is available to help students with pronunciation of each element.

Young Writer's Workshop

<http://www.meddybemps.com/9.700.html>

Parents and educators can use this site to access several story starters. An illustration and a few lines of text are provided to help the young student get started. It won't be long before the student gains confidence in his or her own creativity! One writing tip is for parents and children to take turns making up a sentence to create stories together. Students can submit their work and selected work will be published online.

Science News for Kids

<http://www.sciencenewsforkids.org>

This is a Web site devoted to science news for children ages 9 to 14. The effects of climate change, the grim future of killer whales, and Earth-bound asteroids are just a sample of the featured article topics. This site also offers suggestions for hands-on activities, books, articles, and other useful resources. Students can comment on subject matter and also get ideas for science projects. The site features a weekly brainteaser puzzle, a science fiction composition, weekly science fair profiles, and logic and memory games. Classroom resources are provided that correspond with the weekly article.

notable

Virginia's Share the Skies is the nation's first statewide initiative that enables students and teachers to **study astronomy in real time** during the day without leaving the classroom. Using CCD (charge-coupled device) imaging techniques, students can capture digital images of deep space for further study. For more information, visit <http://www.sharetheskies.org>.

Along with 11 of the nation's leading organizations in the field of education and literacy, the Verizon Foundation supports Thinkfinity.org, which has a home page featuring a variety of **resources for teachers, parents, and students**. Besides activities for featured topics such as "Earth Day," "National Poetry Month," and "Understanding the Economy," the site offers other resources such as lesson plans, interactive games, homework help, maps, and other activities for a variety of topics. To explore this Web site, visit <http://thinkfinity.org>.

Researchers Southgate and Roscigno reported that **exposure to music**, both in and out of school, is tied to higher student achievement in mathematics and reading. Their study, "The Impact of Music on Childhood Adolescent Achievement" is published in *Social Science Quarterly*, Volume 20 (March 2009).

Teachers are using their personal cell phones in the classroom to create more learning opportunities. In her book *Toys to Tools: Connecting Student Cell Phones to Education*, published by the International Society for Technology in Education, Liz Kolb describes 100 **educational uses of cell phones**.

Students who covered at least one major topic for a month or longer in their high school science courses were found to earn higher grades in college science than did students who reported no coverage in depth. In comparing high school courses, 73% studied chemistry in

where students have limited contact with instructors whereas a high school AP course is smaller and the student is more likely to have contact with the teacher.

Mattimore does encourage the College Board and universities to monitor AP courses to ensure that the classes are equivalent to college courses so that they can continue to be a valuable resource to students.

Guiding Students Into College

Many students with good grades lack the information and support necessary to select good colleges, complete the applications, secure financial aid, and actually enroll (Gewertz, C. [2009]. Reports call on schools to guide students into college. *Education Week*, 28[20], 7). One consistent predictor is whether or not the students attend a high school with a college-going culture in which going to college is the norm and the goal. Another key predictor of whether or not an accepted student actually enrolls in college is whether or not he or she completes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Of those students accepted who do complete FAFSA, 84% enroll as compared to only 55% who do not complete FAFSA. Supportive schools, educators, and parents can make a difference in college enrollment.

Comparing the United States and Chinese Performance in Science Reasoning

Professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) consider the development of scientific reasoning equally important to learning content knowledge. Scientific reasoning focuses on domain-general reasoning skills, such as the abilities to systematically explore a problem, to formulate and test hypotheses, to manipulate and isolate variables, and to observe and evaluate the consequences. Training in scientific reasoning has a long-term impact on student achievement. Bao et al. ([2009]. Physics: Learning and scientific reasoning. *Science*, 323, 586–587) compared the conceptual understanding in physics and general scientific reasoning ability of students in China and the United States. Assessment data were collected from both Chinese and U.S. freshmen college students before college-level physics instruction so that the data reflected the students' knowledge and skill development from their formal and informal K–12 education experiences. Although the Chinese students performed better on content knowledge, the U.S. students performed better on scientific reasoning abilities. The researchers concluded that because students ideally need to develop both content knowledge and transferable reasoning skills, teachers needed to develop a more balanced method of education. To access the study "Physics: Learning and Scientific Reasoning," visit <http://www.sciencemag.org>.

Enriching the Classroom With Professionals

People with specialties and expertise are enriching the schools' curriculum and engaging students in in-depth studies and creative enterprises (Manzo, K. K. [2009]. Professionals enrich classroom lessons with expertise. *Education Week*, 28[20], 8). These activities range from studying historical topics to producing Shakespearean plays:

- The Stevens Elementary School in Seattle has developed an in-residence program where historians, artists, and mathematicians work with classroom teachers to plan lessons and activities.
- Washington Latin School in Washington, D.C. has partnered with the Shakespeare Theater Company, which teaches the playwright's "Twelfth Night." Students then attend the theater's rendition of the play. The school also works with a local nonprofit group of retired scientists, engineers, and technicians who help teachers build memorable lessons for testing various roofing materials against hurricane-type winds.
- University of California, Berkeley, pairs graduate students who have received training from Community Resources for Science with area teachers to help devise lessons and experiments that they teach once a month in nearby elementary schools.

All of these partnership activities stimulate enthusiasm for various topics and also help develop critical skills within a specific domain.

Access to Arts Education

The U.S. Governmental Accountability Office (GAO) recently conducted a study to examine if students' access to arts education had changed since the No Child Left Behind Act. Specifically, Congress asked if the amount of instruction time for arts education had changed and, if so, which groups have been more affected than others. The GAO analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Education survey of 50 state arts officials, interviewed officials in 8 school districts and 19 schools, and reviewed existing research. Results indicated that teachers at schools identified as needing improvement and those with higher percentages of minority students were more likely to report a reduction in time spent on the arts. School principals have used several strategies to provide arts education; however, some struggled with decreased budgets and competing demands on instruction time. Because it was difficult to identify specific factors that may have contributed to changes in access to arts education for certain student subgroups, the GAO recommended that future surveys ask respondents to describe the reasons for any changes in instruction time they report. To access the full report, "Access to Arts Education," visit <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09286.pdf>.

notable

depth, 66% studied physics, and 55% studied biology. To examine an abstract of the report, "**Depth Versus Breadth:** How Content Coverage in High School Science Courses Relates to Later Success in College Science Coursework," visit <http://www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/newsRelease.php?id=7912>.

Differences sometimes exist between **course grades and End of Course Test (EOCT)** scores. In Georgia, Christopher Clark (2009) studied these grading disparities and found that some schools and school systems appear to be inflating course grades relative to EOCT scores while others hold their students to higher standards. To read about "Grading Disparities in Georgia's High School," visit <http://www.gaosa.org/newsletter/newsletter20309.html>

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that there are 1.5 million **homeschooled students** in the United States. The three reasons given by parents of more than two thirds of students are concern about the school environment, desire to provide religious or moral instruction, and dissatisfaction with the academic instruction available at other schools. To access the full report, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009030.pdf>.

It is estimated that 1,030,000 K–12 **students are enrolled in online courses**. Students take either online or blended courses in 74.8% of all districts with approximately another 15% of the districts planning to introduce them over the next 3 years. Although the numbers are impressive, the quality of online courses, costs, and policies may slow their growth. To access the full report, "K–12 Online Learning: A 2008 Follow-Up of the Survey of the U. S. School District Administrators," visit http://www.sloanconsortium.org/publications/survey/pdf/k-12_online_learning_2008.pdf.

grants and awards

The Association of Teacher Educators' Robert J. Stevenson Scholarship provides assistance to classroom teachers who are working toward an **advanced degree to enhance teacher leadership skills** through the study of teaching. Eligible applicants are those who are taking coursework leading to National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification or who are engaged in the study of curriculum and instruction and/or supervision. Applicants must also be ATE members, be full- or part-time graduate students, and have a GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. The maximum award is \$1,200 and may support tuition, books, or other education expenses. Deadline is July 15, 2009. For more information, contact Cynthia S. Haggard, 269 Steeplechase Dr., Exton, PA 19341 or visit http://www.ate1.org/pubs/Stevenson_Scholars.cfm.

The Ezra Jack Keats Foundation offers mini-grants to school and public libraries for programs that **encourage literacy and creativity** in children. Programs relating to the work of Ezra Jack Keats are welcome, but not required. Eligible applicants are public schools and libraries located anywhere in the United States, including Puerto Rico and Guam. The maximum award is \$500. Deadline is September 15, 2009. For more information visit <http://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/programs/index.html>.

The Mickelson ExxonMobil 2010 Teachers Academy offers a 5-day program designed to provide third-through fifth-grade teachers with knowledge and skills to motivate students to pursue **careers in science and math**. Third- through fifth-grade teachers in the United States are eligible. Maximum award is an all-expenses-paid, 5-day program in July 2010 in Jersey City, NJ. Deadline: October 31, 2009. For more information, visit http://www.sendmyteacher.com/send_your_teacher.php.

The School Band and Orchestra Magazine Essay Scholarship

The *School Band and Orchestra Magazine* promotes music and arts education in schools. Their scholarship program awards ten \$1,000 scholarships to students in grades 9–12. All public and private school students (including those who are homeschooled) are eligible to participate. Students should submit an essay (250-word maximum) on the topic, “How does music unite cultures within your school and community?” Scholarship entries will be judged by the *SBO Magazine* editorial board and a panel of music professionals. Winners will be selected from two categories based on grade level. There will be five \$1,000 scholarships awarded to students in grades 4–8 and five \$1,000 scholarships awarded to students in grades 9–12. In addition, music merchandise from Alfred Publishing, Hershey's Fund Raising, Yamaha Corporation of America, and Avedis Zildjian Company will be awarded to the schools of the scholarship winners. Entry forms are available online starting September 1, and the scholarship deadline is December 31. Previous winning essays are available on the Web site. For more information, please visit <http://www.sbomagazine.com/ME2/dirsect.asp?sid=F304E8D78FBE4F74B99F91D7AA49CDBA&nm=Essay+Contest>.

American Harlequin Dance Scholarship Program

In an effort to provide better opportunities for young people pursuing performing arts careers, American Harlequin Corporation established an annual Dance Scholarship Program. American Harlequin manufactures floors for dance, performing arts, entertainment, and display. Their first annual scholarship program started in 1999 and this year they are awarding \$25,000 to 20 winners. They hope that this program will offer financial help to young people who wish to continue to pursue dancing as a career in the midst of uncertain economic times. U.S. and Canadian citizens between the ages of 15 and 21 years of age and enrolled in a public or private dance school program may apply. Awards include one \$5,000 scholarship, two \$3,000 scholarships, three \$2,000 scholarships, two \$1,000 scholarships, and twelve \$500 scholarships. Scholarship winners will be randomly selected by a drawing at the annual American Harlequin Corporation Corporate meeting to be held in December 2009. Winners will be notified by mail. Applications must postmarked by November 1, 2009. For more information, please visit <http://www.harlequinfloors.com/us/en>.

Voice of Democracy Audio-Essay Contest

The Veterans of Foreign Wars seek to encourage millions of America's young adults to higher ideals and greater personal achievement through working with youth in scouting, sports, Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and scholarship programs. One of these programs, the Voice of Democracy scholarship contest, was created to foster patriotism by allowing students the opportunity to voice their opinion on the given theme of patriotism. The theme is chosen by the Veterans of Foreign Wars commander-in-chief and is purposefully broad in scope in order to encourage originality. The Voice of Democracy scholarship program was started in 1947 and is an audio-essay contest for high school students in grades 9–12. Each year more than \$3 million in scholarships are awarded. The first-place winner receives a \$30,000 scholarship that is paid directly to the recipient's American university, college, or vocational/technical school. Students should submit the entry form, essay, and recording to a local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post. The deadline is November 1, 2009. For more information, please visit <http://www.vfw.org/index.cfm?fa=cmt.y.level&did=150>.

The L. Ron Hubbard Illustrators of the Future Contest

The L. Ron Hubbard Illustrators of the Future Contest was started in 1988 as an expression of L. Ron Hubbard's wish that the relationship between the written word and the illustrator's art would not die. No entry fee is required and artists retain all rights to the illustration. The contest is open to new and amateur artists from all over the world. Entrants should submit three reproductions of original, unpublished illustrations in a color or black-and-white medium created from the artist's imagination. All themes of science fiction and fantasy illustrations are welcome. The contest has four quarters each year, running from October 1–December 31, January 1–March 31, April 1–June 30, and July 1–September 30. Entries will be judged by professional artists. Three cowinners in each quarter receive \$500 and a trophy. Winners are also eligible to compete for the annual grand prize of an additional cash grant of \$5,000 and the grand-prize trophy. Entries must be postmarked on or before the last day of the quarter. For more information, please visit <http://www.writersofthefuture.com/rules.htm#illus>.

grants and awards

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) invites schools to participate in Challenge 20/20, a program that **brings together two schools**: one from the United States and one from outside of the United States. Teacher-student teams from both schools work together throughout the fall 2009 school semester to come up with a solution to a global problem. Challenge 20/20 is based on Jean François Rischard's book, "High Noon: 20 Global Problems, 20 Years to Solve Them." All U.S. public and private schools are eligible. The maximum award is program participation. Deadline is August 17, 2009. For more information and an online application, visit <http://www.nais.org/resources/index.cfm?ItemNumber=147262>.

Lemelson and MIT offer an opportunity for high school students to cultivate their **creativity and experience invention**. InvenTeam students rely on inquiry and hands-on problem solving to develop invention prototypes. Science, math, and technology teachers at public, private, and vocational high schools may apply. The maximum award is \$10,000. The initial application is available online each fall and due in the spring for grants awarded the following academic year. For more information, visit <http://web.mit.edu/inventteams/apply.html>.

The Music Is Revolution Foundation supports grants to help teachers implement, support, and/or improve their ability to provide **quality music education** for their students. Only projects that clearly contain a music education will be considered. Funds may be used for supplies, materials, equipment, transportation for a field trip, and/or to bring a performer or musical group to the school. Eligible applicants include public school teachers of children in grades K–12. The maximum award is \$500. There is no deadline. For more information and an application, visit <http://www.musicisrevolution.org>.

grants and awards

The Cruise Industry Charitable Foundation supports **academic enrichment** opportunities aimed at enhancing student proficiencies in reading, math, and science, particularly to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged students. Eligible applicants must meet federal 501(c)(3) requirements. Maximum award is \$66,000. There is no deadline. For more information visit <http://www.cruisefoundation.org>.

Sponsored by the U.S. General Services Administration, Computers for Learning place **computers in classrooms** and prepare children to contribute and compete in the 21st century. The program transfers excess federal computer equipment to schools and educational nonprofit organizations, giving special consideration to those with the greatest need. For more information, visit <http://www.computers.fed.gov/Public/home.asp>.

The Federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) encourages and informs minority and disadvantaged teenage students of **educational and career opportunities in health professions** and assists minorities and disadvantaged students in planning and preparing for postsecondary education in the healthcare professions. For more information about Kids Into Health Careers, visit <http://ask.hrsa.gov/orgdetail.cfm?OrgID=1773>.

The National Parks supports the **Teacher to Ranger to Teacher Program (TRT)** that links National Parks units with teachers from Title I school districts. Under TRT, selected teachers spend a summer working as uniformed park rangers and perform various duties depending on their interests and the needs of the park. Supplemental pay is generally \$300 per week for 8 to 10 weeks of service. To find out about TRT work opportunities, visit <http://www.nps.gov/wupa/forteachers/trt.htm>.

JULY

1–5

Mensa Annual Gathering at the Omni William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA. For more information, please visit <http://www.ag2009.us.mensa.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home8>.

2–6

PG Retreat for families with highly and profoundly gifted children at the Glen Eyrie Conference Center in Colorado Springs, CO. For more information, please visit <http://pgretreat.com>.

10–12

Beyond IQ Midwest Conference at the Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, IL. For more information, please visit <http://www.giftedconferenceplanners.org>.

13–24

The 32nd Annual Confratute Summer Institute at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT. Participants can come for one week or both. For more information, please visit <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/confratute>.

Weeks 1 and 2 of the 2009 Summer Institute on Academic Diversity at The University of Virginia Curry School of Education in Charlottesville, VA. For more information, please visit <http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/about-siad-institutes-165>.

17–19

Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted Conference in Orlando, FL. For more information, please visit http://www.sengifted.org/conference_about.shtml.

20–21

The 7th Annual Institute for Teachers of Gifted Youth at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, SD. For more information, please visit <http://www.usd.edu/ed/ci/gifted/institute.cfm>.

26–31

The 13th Annual Edufest at Boise State University in Boise, ID. For more information, please visit <http://www.edufest.org>.

29–31

The New Mexico Association for the Gifted (NMAG) 2009 Summer Institute on Gifted Education at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Albuquerque, NM. For more information, please visit http://nmgifted.org/SI2009/SI2009_FLYer.pdf.

31–AUGUST 2

California Homeschooling Network Family Expo at the Ontario Marriott Hotel in Ontario, CA. For more information, please visit <http://californiahomeschool.net/events/expo/familyexpo.htm>.

AUGUST

3–7

The World Council for Gifted and Talented (WCGTC) 18th Biennial Conference at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre Hotel in Vancouver, Canada. For more information, please visit <http://conference.world-gifted.org>.

24–27

The International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE-Paris) Conference in Ulm, Germany. For more information, please visit http://icieparis.net/icie_conference.

OCTOBER

1

National Talent Network (NTN) 5th Annual Gifted & Talented Learning Fair at EIRC in Sewell, NJ. For more information, please visit <http://www.eirc.org/website/Programs-and-Services/National-Talent-Network/Gifted-and-Talented-Resources.html>.

1–2

The Wisconsin Association for Talented and Gifted (WATG) 2009 Annual Fall Conference at the Kalahari Resort and Conference Center in Wisconsin Dells, WI. For more information, please visit <http://www.watg.org>.

4–6

The Kansas Association for Gifted, Talented and Creative (KGTC) conference in Lawrence, KS. For more information, please visit <http://www.kgtc.org/convention.htm>.

5–6

Iowa Talented and Gifted Association (ITAG) 2009 Conference at the Coralville Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Coralville, IA. For more information, please visit <http://64.23.57.146/iowatag/HTML/2009conference.html>.

did you know . . .

. . . 69.8% of the school districts had at least one student who had taken an online course.

. . . 41% of the school districts had at least one student who had taken a blended course.

. . . 14% of the districts had at least one K–5 student enrolled in an online or blended course.

. . . 17% of the districts had at least one 6–8 student enrolled in an online or blended course.

. . . 69% of the districts had at least one 9–12 student enrolled in an online or blended course.

. . . 75% of the districts responded that online or blended courses were important because they offered courses not otherwise available at the school.

. . . 74% of the districts responded that online or blended courses were important because they met the needs of specific groups of students.

. . . 68% of the districts responded that online or blended courses were important because they offered Advanced Placement or college-level courses.

. . . 49% of the districts responded that they viewed issues about course development and/or purchasing costs as important.

. . . 45% of the districts responded that they viewed concerns about receiving funding based on student attendance as important.

. . . 46.5% of the districts that have fully online courses use postsecondary institutions as their provider.

. . . 40.7% of the districts that have fully online courses use virtual schools in their states as their provider.

Results are from A. G. Picciano and J. Seaman's (2009) study, *K–12 Online Learning: A 2008 Follow-Up Survey of U. S. School District Administrators*, which was supported by the Sloan Foundation and conducted by researchers from Hunter and Babson Colleges. The 867 respondents represented 5.4% of all school districts of interest in all 50 states and DC.

Meeting the Needs of Gifted Students Within an RtI Framework



by Mary Ruth Coleman
and Claire E. Hughes



“The purpose of RtI is squarely improving results for students: All students. Indeed, RtI is not about special education, nor general education, nor talented and gifted, nor at-risk, nor migrant education . . . RtI is about Every Education” (Tilly, 2009, p. 12).

Response to Intervention (RtI) is sweeping the country, changing the way children's educational needs are recognized and met. RtI was introduced through special education legislation as part of IDEA 2004 and offered an alternative approach for identifying students with learning disabilities (Bender & Shores, 2007). Its impact today, however, has moved well beyond this initial goal (Council for Exceptional Children, 2007). RtI is designed to bring together information about the child's strengths and needs with evidence-based instructional approaches that support the child's success (Kirk, Gallagher, Coleman, & Anastasiow, 2009). Although RtI is still an emerging practice, it hinges on a collaborative approach to recognizing and responding to the needs of each child. This collaborative approach requires educators to think about the child first and match the supports and services to the child's strengths and needs. The allocation of resources follows the supports and services, promoting synergy rather than increasing fragmentation, as the needs of the child increase. In other words, within the RtI model, when the child's needs are the most intense, educational *resources can be combined* to provide greater support. This use of resources differs significantly from the traditional approaches where as the needs of the child intensify, the supports and services become more separate and rigidly

codified with clear boundaries delineating the allocation of resources.

Key components of RtI include: (a) a tiered approach to supports and services; (b) early intervention prior to formal identification; (c) screening, assessments, and progress monitoring (dynamic assessments to determine the child's needs and to plan instruction); (d) the use of standard protocol interventions; and (e) collaborative problem-solving and planning for the child with the parents. This article will explore what gifted education might look like within an RtI framework.

The Tiered Approach to Supports and Services

The use of tiered approaches to supporting strengths is not new for gifted education. We have relied on curriculum differentiation strategies that promote tiered lessons and units for many years (Tomlinson, 1999). The tiered approach within RtI extends this thinking to the supports and services provided. What this might look like in each service tier is briefly presented below.

Tier I

The general education classroom offers a quality learning environment, nurtures all children with a focus on high-end learning opportunities, uses dynamic assessments

The focus of RtI is on early intervention, the early provision of services that build on the child's strengths and address his or her learning needs.

including whole-class screenings for potential, and uses standardized progress monitoring to document children's mastery of the curriculum. (The general education teacher is responsible for supports and differentiation.)

Tier II

A collaborative approach provides additional supports and learning opportunities for children based on strengths and needs. It responds to the child based on data showing evidence of strengths, needs, and interests; provides supports often to small groups of children within the general classroom setting; administers individual assessments to understand the child's strengths and develop plans for differentiated instruction; and uses a standard protocol to offer additional challenges and high-end learning opportunities. (Collaboration between the general and gifted education teachers is essential, with parents being included in the discussion of the child's strengths and weaknesses.)

Tier III

More intense and individualized services are provided to meet the needs of the child. Assessments, including additional information regarding the

child's strengths and a body-of-evidence (including standardized measures), are conducted to look at the child's needs. Nomination for formal identification is considered and parents are included in the decision making. (The gifted education specialist may take the lead at this point.)

Early Intervention to Support the Child's Strengths

The focus of RtI is on early intervention, the early provision of services that build on the child's strengths and address his or her learning needs. Early intervention is critical in order to prevent problems, to mitigate the impact of existing problems, and to ensure that strengths do not diminish. Early intervention generally focuses on remediation to shore-up areas of weakness for the child. For gifted children, however, the early intervention focuses on nurturing potential to support the child's areas of strength. With the RtI approach, early intervention can begin as soon as the strengths of the child are recognized—often well before the child is formally identified as gifted. In this way, the child's strengths are nurtured during the first years of schooling, building a strong platform

for the child's continued success. In many schools, formal identification of giftedness does not take place until the end of second or third grade; thus, young children with high potential are left with little to no additional support. Early recognition of and response to the child's strengths is important for all children, but it is essential for young gifted children from culturally/linguistically diverse and economically disadvantaged families. The focus on early nurturing of potential helps to ensure that each child is placed on a trajectory for maximum success.

Screening, Assessment, and Progress Monitoring

The use of screening to recognize children with high potential is part of the culture of gifted education. Screening remains critical within an RtI approach. Assessments concentrate on the child's strengths and include both formal and informal measures to document the child's needs. The newer feature of assessment, introduced by RtI, is progress monitoring. Progress monitoring requires the use of dynamic assessments to monitor the child's mastery of specific learning objectives and to inform instruction. It relies on standardized measures of skill development and on curriculum-based measurements of content mastery. These measurements are used to document where the child "is" in relation to normative expectations when compared with others of his or her same age and/or in relation to curriculum mastery for grade-level expectations. For gifted children, in their areas of strength, this documentation must reflect early mastery of content and may require the use of off-grade-level measures to accurately capture the child's learning levels. In this way, progress monitoring documents the child's actual mastery so that

appropriate adjustments in curriculum and instruction can be made. Thus, for gifted children, progress-monitoring data become the foundation for curriculum compacting by documenting the need for additional enrichment or acceleration.

Standard Protocols for Instruction

The use of research-based practices to provide appropriate support for children is a mainstay within RtI. Research-based standard protocols are developed to bring consistency to instruction and to help ensure that all children have access to learning opportunities that are grounded in “best practice.” Standard protocols provide teachers with predetermined and ready-made lessons, strategies, and instructional materials to be used with their students. Currently, most standard protocols are aimed at providing intensive support for children who are struggling with reading or math. Standard protocols for gifted students will look different from these because they will focus on the child’s strengths, ensuring that rigorous curriculum is provided. Standard protocols for children in their areas of strength have not yet been widely developed within our field. As we move to develop these, we can draw on our rich history of curriculum differentiation to design high-end learning protocols that can be used to support children with strengths and interests across the curriculum (Tomlinson, 1999; VanTassel-Baska, 2003).

Collaborative Problem-Solving With Parental Involvement

In addition to the use of standard protocols to respond to the needs

of children, RtI includes a collaborative problem-solving approach. Some advocates of RtI see these as mutually exclusive approaches to addressing children’s needs. For gifted children, however, standard protocols *and* collaborative problem-solving approaches seem to be extremely compatible and mutually complementary. Standard protocols can and should be used to meet the needs of gifted children, yet these alone often will not be enough. Collaborative problem solving is a key addition because it (a) ensures that families are included as partners in planning; (b) provides a vehicle to allow planning for the child to go beyond standard protocols (e.g., social and emotional needs, dual-enrollment opportunities, interest-based learning, independent studies); and (c) can be used to plan for gifted children with more unique and/or complex needs (e.g., twice-exceptional children, gifted English language learners, highly gifted children). Collaborative planning across school personnel and with families has always been considered important within gifted education and should remain so within an RtI framework.

Conclusion on RtI and Gifted Education

Thinking about how gifted education fits within an RtI framework provides an opportunity to reexamine what we believe about meeting the needs of children. Some reflections on RtI for gifted education include:

- the emphasis within RtI on early intervention or the recognition of strengths prior to formal identification reminds us of our commitment to nurture potential in all children;
- the provision of tiered responses that scaffold learning and support

across general and gifted education reminds us of our commitment to excellence for all;

- the use of dynamic assessments that inform instruction reminds us of the importance of data-driven decision making;
- the use of standard protocols reminds us that rigorous curriculum is central to differentiated instruction; and
- the use of collaborative planning reminds of the importance of partnerships with parents as we plan to meet the child’s needs.

All in all, done correctly, gifted education can be a good fit with the RtI approach! **GCT**

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Useful Web Sites for RtI Implementation and Strategies

Intervention Central

<http://www.interventioncentral.org>

The site for all things RtI: processes, forms, charts, links, and interventions.

National Center on Response to Intervention

<http://www.rti4success.org>

This center's mission is to provide technical assistance and dissemination about proven and promising models for RtI and Early Intervening Services (EIS) to state and local educators, families, and other stakeholders. The center works in four areas: (1) knowledge production, which involves a Technical Review Committee of experts who will independently evaluate the scientific rigor, conditions for successful implementation, and the cultural and linguistic competence of all identified models (and components); (2) implementation supports, which involve training and follow-up activities to scale-up RtI and EIS on a broad scale; (3) information dissemination, which involves forming com-

munities of practice to improve the likelihood that consumers will adopt RtI models; and (4) formative evaluation, which involves an assessment of the quality, implementation, impact, and cost effectiveness of the services offered.

The Iris Center

<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>

Materials by Fuchs and Fuchs, two of the most prolific and influential people in RtI today, are located at this center.

What Works Clearinghouse

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>

This site is filled with research and papers that detail what government research has found.

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring

<http://www.studentprogress.org>

Charts, graphs, and probes are provided for progress monitoring. This site has downloadable articles,

PowerPoint presentations, Frequently Asked Questions documents, and additional resources about screening, student progress monitoring, Curriculum-Based Measurement, applying decision making to IEPs, and other research-based topics. All publications are designed to inform and assist audiences in implementing student progress monitoring at the classroom, building, local, or state level. In addition, the center has established a standard process to evaluate the scientific rigor of commercially available tools to monitor students' progress.

AIMSweb

<http://www.aimsweb.com>

This site offers materials and a progress monitoring system.

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening—University of Virginia

<http://pals.virginia.edu>

Research and information on screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring for literacy is provided.

IDEA Partnership

<http://ideapartnership.org>

Offers *Dialogue Guides* focused on conducting interactive discussions about the process of RtI.

Reading Rockets

<http://www.readingrockets.org>

This site provides reading probes and readability formulas, as well as a wealth of reading resources.

RTI Action Network

<http://rtinetwork.org>

The National Center for Learning Disabilities provides RtI information and offers an online community to connect with others at this Web site.

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD) Learning Disabilities Resource Kit

http://www.nrclld.org/resource_kit

NRCLD has developed a kit to help navigate changes related to specific learning disability determination and responsiveness to intervention. All materials in the kit are in the public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. Sections of the kit include: General Information, Tools for Change, Getting Started Manual, RtI Manual, PowerPoint Presentations, and Parent Pages.

National Association of School Psychologists Resources—Response to Intervention

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/rti/index.aspx>

One of the early adopter groups of RtI, the National Association of School Psychologists offers an excellent selection of research and implications for school psychologists and assessment issues on this Web site.

Great Schools.net: Your Child With Learning Difficulties (formerly Schwab Learning)

<http://www.greatschools.net/content/specialNeeds.page?fromSchwab=1>

Compilations of interventions and educational ideas are provided.

Joe Witt: Resources and Research on STEEP and RTI

<http://www.joewitt.org>

Leading researcher and author about RtI, Joe Witt shares resources and information on Response to Intervention, instruction, and progress monitoring.

OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports

<http://www.pbis.org>

The center has been established to give schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective schoolwide disciplinary practices. The overall goals of the center are to: (a) identify and enhance knowledge about, and practical demonstration of, schoolwide PBS practices, systems, and outcomes along the three-tiered continuum (primary, secondary, tertiary); and (b) develop, conduct, and evaluate technical assistance and dissemination efforts that allow evidence-based practices to be implemented on a large scale with high durability and effectiveness. The PBIS Center has recently released a newsletter article on the relationship between PBIS and RtI. This article can be accessed at <http://www.pbis.org/rti/default.aspx>.

Center for Early Literacy Learning

<http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org>

This project is using a tiered model of intervention approach as part of their

conceptual framework in identifying evidence-based practices that promote literacy and language development in young children (0–5). Tier 1 includes literacy-rich learning opportunities that are the contexts for skill acquisition for all young children, Tier 2 includes specific instructional practices that promote literacy learning for all young children, and Tier 3 includes specialized practices for supporting the literacy learning of young children with disabilities or learning difficulties that need more specialized interventions. CELL is currently conducting research syntheses on various practices that promote language and literacy. Based on their research syntheses, they will ultimately be developing six practice guide toolkits for practitioners and families that address various age levels (infant, toddler, preschooler), formal and informal practices, different literacy-related competencies (print-related and linguistic processing), and the three tiers of intervention.

Council for Exceptional Children's Blog

<http://cecblog.typepad.com/rti/>

About RtI and moderated by Cara Shores, this site offers regular tips and strategies for implementation.

Scientifically Based Research


<http://www.gosbr.net>

This site has ideas and links for practitioners based on proven practices.

Dr. Mac's Behavior Management Site

<http://www.behavioradvisor.com>

This site is full of strategies for behavioral and emotional issues.



Response to Intervention (RtI) has promise for helping students, particularly ones with disabilities, achieve higher levels of academic and behavioral success in the general education classroom. But what does it mean for gifted students or for those who are gifted and have a learning disability, such as twice-exceptional students? How might current RtI models be amended to identify and support the advanced learning needs of children who learn at a faster pace and require more complex curricula? In this article, we will describe the various RtI frameworks and describe five states where there is either active consideration for gifted education in their state's RtI policies or potential for gifted education to play a role.

RtI Models *for Gifted Children*

by Karen Rollins, Chrystyna V. Mursky,
Sneha Shah-Coltrane, and Susan K. Johnsen

RtI Models That Focus on Children With Disabilities

When examining Response to Intervention practices, most models incorporate multitiered interventions. Within each tier, the intervention varies in terms of identification, intensity, and duration (Mellard, Byrd, Johnson, Tollefson, & Boesche, 2004). The majority of RtI models include a system for monitoring learner progress, leadership and professional development, scientifically based practices in general education and in progressive tiers, and objective cut points for identifying student responsiveness (Mellard et al., 2004).

Two types of methods are generally used within the tiers of services: a standard protocol model (O'Connor, Harty, & Fulmer, 2005; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, & Hickman, 2003) and a problem-solving model (Deno, 2002; Kovaleski, 2002; Tilly, Reschly, & Grimes, 1999).

The Standard Protocol Model

The standard protocol model requires the use of scientifically based classroom instruction for all students using the same curriculum, the same program, and/or the same management strategies; regular administration of curriculum-based assessments; and frequent comparisons of at-risk students to expected or normal growth (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005). Because educators do not have to make any decisions, it is relatively easy to train practitioners to use an intervention correctly with large numbers of students. Many times the lessons are scripted to ensure the quality of

the intervention and to avoid relying on professionals with uneven training and background (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005). The goal of this model is to achieve mastery for the majority of students and to ensure the fidelity of the intervention so that students who meet the criterion for more intensive services actually need them—and not because they received inadequate instruction.

Fuchs and Fuchs (2005) described an elementary school that uses a standard protocol RtI model for students with reading difficulties. For screening, each first-grade student is administered a curriculum-based measurement word identification fluency assessment (CBM-WIF) in September. All students in Tier 1 instruction receive a validated reading curriculum program. To ensure that the reading program is implemented correctly, the school's lead reading teacher observes each first-grade teacher's classroom quarterly. Teachers keep records that monitor each student's progress. Students who are not learning approximately 1.75 words per week receive Tier 2 instruction. In Tier 2, students receive 45 minutes of instruction four times each week in groups of one to three from tutors who have completed training. The lead reading teacher also observes these tutors and provides corrective feedback. Once each week, the lead reading teacher meets with all tutors for one hour to examine the students' CBM-WIF graphs and to problem solve about students whose progress is inadequate. Tutoring sessions then focus on specific areas of student weakness that might include phonological awareness, letter-sound recognition, decoding, sight word recognition, short story reading with highly explicit instruction,

and self-regulated learning strategies to increase motivation and goal-directed learning. In this model, the third tier is referral to special education, which includes a comprehensive evaluation phase. Across all tiers, teams have empirically set decision rules to plan changes based on past research with specific interventions.

In summary, the standard protocol RtI model uses a common, standardized curriculum in Tier 1, monitors students to identify those who are not making progress as expected, provides for collaboration among special and general educators, and refers to specialized services in Tier 3 if the student does not progress as expected (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2008). Although the standard protocol is used primarily for children who may need additional support for success in reading, it also might be used with children who are advanced in reading if the standard curriculum can be differentiated.

The Problem-Solving Model

The problem-solving model does not use a standard program for all students. Instead, it relies on a system of increasingly intensive interventions that are planned and implemented by school personnel with increasing levels of knowledge and expertise that ultimately results in an effective program for a particular student (Deno, 2002; Mellard et al., 2004). The four-level problem-solving model generally involves (a) identifying the problem, (b) designing and implementing interventions, (c) monitoring the student's progress and modifying the interventions according to the student's responsiveness, and (d) planning the next steps. Because the use of a single program is not dictated, the level of expertise and the need for collaborative consultation are much higher.

For example, the Minneapolis Public Schools use a three-stage problem-solving model (Hegranes, Casey, & Marston, 2006). The problem-solving steps include (a) problem identification, (b) problem definition, (c) designing intervention plans, (d) implementing interventions, and (e) problem solution. In Stage 1, classroom intervention, the teacher identifies specific concerns and baseline data are collected for an individual student. Other relevant information is collected from the student, parents, and staff members, and includes school history and relevant health issues. Classroom modifications are then made and the student's progress is documented for 4–6 weeks. Following this modification and perhaps other modifications, the student may enter Stage 2. At this stage, a team of educators provides research-based intervention strategies and ideas to the general education teacher. Besides the general education teacher, the team may include a Title I teacher, counselor, social worker, psychologist, speech and language pathologist, special education teacher(s), and building administrator. The team establishes a goal and an intervention is selected. To maintain the integrity of the intervention, activities are monitored and documented. These data are then used to document student progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the suggested interventions, approximately 6–8 weeks later. The team then decides to continue the intervention, to modify the intervention, or to refer the student for special education evaluation—Stage 3.

In summary, the problem-solving RtI model uses varied curriculum and multiple interventions, monitors students to identify those who are making or not making expected progress, provides for collaboration among a range of educators, and refers to spe-

cial education services if the suggested interventions are ineffective.

RtI Models That Include Gifted and Talented Students

Although most of the current models address only those students who are not progressing as expected, some RtI models have included gifted and talented students. These models tend to use a problem-solving approach and incorporate (a) curriculum and instructional practices, (b) monitoring of student progress, (c) collaboration, and/or (d) tiered levels of services. This section will describe two of these models in detail and other state RtI models that include gifted students.

U-STARS~PLUS

Sneha Shah-Coltrane describes U-STARS~PLUS (Using Science, Talents, Abilities to Recognize Students ~ Promoting Learning for Underrepresented Students) as focusing on the early nurturing, recognition, and response to children with outstanding potential in the early years of schooling. This focus on early nurturing of potential is especially important for children from historically underrepresented populations. Too often in our schools, outstanding potential of students is not tapped and remains hidden, leading to disengagement of learning and, over time, the loss of talent. It is critical for educators to intentionally create classroom and school environments that bring out the best in young children. By intentionally bringing out the best in students, we are able to maximize outstanding potential, create an achievement-orientation to schooling, and ensure that children's needs are met. With the focus on general education, all of this

can take place prior to formal identification, which for most gifted children is in the later years of elementary school. The U-STARS-PLUS approach is centered in the K–3 regular education classroom and first serves *all* students with more intense interventions for children who show additional needs.

Tiered Approach to Support and Services. Five primary U-STARS-PLUS components are integrated within the principles of RtI: High-End Learning Opportunities, Systematic Observation of Students, centered around the Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) forms, Hands-On/Inquiry-Based Science, Family Partnerships, and Systemic Capacity Building. When taken together, they synergize to have the greatest impact for children to maximize their potential.

Tier I. U-STARS-PLUS focuses on high-end learning opportunities, hands-on/inquiry-based science, dynamic assessment, and a systematic whole-class observation of potential. Using the Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS) forms, the general education classroom teacher ensures that *all* children are given the support and opportunity to show their best, without a predetermined decision as to who is “gifted.” The TOPS is a classroom observational tool to guide teachers as they observe their children in multiple settings over time and recognize outstanding potential. U-STARS-PLUS is founded on a key principle that a child's needs are best understood by building a body of evidence relating to multiple perspectives of a child. In a classroom environment that intentionally cultivates potential, the TOPS begins with a whole-class observation, ensuring that all children are being observed systematically, and leads to individual observations of children as the need becomes apparent. As

teachers utilize the TOPS, their view of children refocuses from “at-risk” to “at-potential” and they further modify the curriculum and instruction to respond to needs.

Tier II. Based on the whole-class observation of students in the general education classroom, which is guided by the TOPS, students who may need more support are recognized. At this point, an individual TOPS is completed, along with work sampling and other classroom assessments to

Tier III. As observation and classroom responses continue, more intense and individualized services are provided to meet the needs of particular children with high-end needs. The individual TOPS is augmented with additional information regarding the child's strengths/needs and a body of evidence is built to take a closer look at the child. Nomination for formal gifted identification may be considered at this point, and families are included in the decision-making process. The

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help teachers understand the child's strengths/needs. Based on this evidence, a plan for differentiated curriculum and instruction is developed. Differentiated instruction is primarily delivered in the general education classroom using a variety of strategies, including science as a focused content area. By providing differentiated experiences in science, as well as other areas, children become engaged with learning, problem solve in meaningful ways, and develop literacy skills and content-rich concepts and understandings. Collaboration with gifted education specialists at this level also is helpful. This is an ongoing process and teachers are encouraged to look for students who may need additional enrichment and challenge throughout the year. Families often are included in discussion of the child's strengths at this level of support.

lead for this high level of support may be the gifted education specialist.

Dynamic Assessment (Progress Monitoring). In order for support and services to match student needs, dynamic assessment that informs instruction is crucial. U-STARS-PLUS uses the TOPS as the focused tool for systematic teacher observation of students and to inform classroom instruction. Beginning with the whole-class observation in Tier I and moving toward more individualized observations ensures that our recognition of the child's strengths is matched with differentiated curricula and instruction early to ensure his or her success. Teachers use basic differentiation strategies so that as students' needs change, so can their learning experiences. Curriculum compacting also is used along with assessments designed to document the students' learning

needs. These assessment practices are similar to progress monitoring in the RtI approach in that they work to document the child's mastery of the curriculum so that appropriate next steps can be planned.

Collaboration. U-STARS-PLUS believes that collaboration with other school personnel and families of students is critical to ensure success for children in school. Meaningful partnerships are established with families so that educators and families learn together and work toward creating the most appropriate learning experiences for children. As teachers use the TOPS to guide their observations and build a body of evidence for the child, they are encouraged to seek input from other school personnel and from family members to provide a more complete understanding of a child's strengths and needs. The decision to formally identify a child as gifted is made through a collaborative process when the child needs more intense support.

Wisconsin

Chrystyna V. Mursky describes how the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has expanded upon the special education application of Response to Intervention to include gifted students. DPI acknowledges the merits of using RtI for students that are at risk for failure, but also recognizes the potential it holds for achieving higher levels of academic and behavioral success for *all* students, including those whose needs extend beyond the core curriculum. For this reason, they have named the framework Response to Intervention/*Instruction*, which reflects their inclusive philosophy. Members who have contributed to the model are from a variety of different DPI teams.

DPI believes that the concept of Response to Intervention/Instruction is, on the one hand, quite simple

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction suggests that RtI begins with high-quality instruction based on rigorous curriculum and research-based effective practice.

because it is based on collaborative decision making using sound assessments to determine if what teachers are doing is working. On the other hand, it also believes RtI is quite complex because it represents a systems change—a process that often takes 3–6 years to complete. Individual districts in Wisconsin make their own curricular and assessment decisions, so the DPI does not prescribe any particular RtI framework (such as the three-tiered model), but advocates that a successful RtI system integrates three key components: (a) high-quality instructional practice, (b) continuous review of student progress, and (c) collaboration.

High-Quality Instruction. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction suggests that RtI begins with high-quality instruction based on rigorous curriculum and research-based effective practice. Tomlinson (2005) described several key aspects that characterize this curriculum. It (a) focuses on rich and profound ideas of the discipline; (b) engages students emotionally and cognitively; (c) requires students to solve problems, address issues, and create products;

and (d) is relevant to students' lives. McTighe (2008) provided guidance on how to design and implement curriculum that reflects Tomlinson's characteristics. Teachers begin by identifying the desired results, a four-step process. First, teachers establish relevant goals based on content standards, course or program objectives, learning outcomes, and the like. Second, they specify the enduring understandings, or the big ideas, that are embedded in the goals. These goals are phrased in ways that are relevant to students' experiences and interests in order to engage them in learning. This step is important as it focuses the curriculum on the profound ideas of the discipline, moving beyond facts and information. Examples of the big ideas include change, patterns, and power. Third, teachers develop essential questions that foster inquiry, understanding of the big ideas, problem solving, and transfer of learning. Finally, teachers define what students will know and be able to do and how the knowledge and skills will help students master the enduring understandings. The core or universal curriculum is comprised of the goals, enduring understandings, and essential questions created as a result of this four-step process. This rich and rigorous core curriculum is designed for all students and is generally not differentiated.

According to McTighe (2008), the next step is determining what evidence will be gathered so that students can demonstrate that they have mastered the targeted knowledge, skills, and understandings. This evidence is composed primarily of authentic, complex performance tasks that provide students opportunities to grapple with ideas and issues. The tasks focus on real-world contexts, ask students to apply knowledge and skills they have acquired to novel situations, and require students to support their work.

Clear criteria for assessing the products or performances are established and communicated to the students. Teachers may differentiate the specific tasks in order to maximize students' chances of demonstrating what they know, understand, and can do. In addition to authentic performance tasks, students are given other opportunities to demonstrate achievement. These might include tests, quizzes, homework, and journals. Students also benefit from reflecting upon and self-assessing their own learning, which helps them become more independent. McTighe suggested that only after the core curriculum has been established and the acceptable evidence defined do teachers plan learning experiences and instruction.

Central to the success of Wisconsin's Response to Intervention/Instruction framework is putting students at the center of these decisions. High-quality classroom instructional practices respond to students' individual differences to help them meet academic and behavioral benchmarks. Teachers are flexible in planning learning opportunities, a method often referred to as differentiated instruction. As previously mentioned, the established goals, enduring understandings, and essential questions represent the core curriculum and are rarely differentiated. Students, however, differ in their readiness, learning profiles, interests, and talents. Learning opportunities therefore must be differentiated to engage each student in meaningful tasks that offer an appropriate level of challenge. Teachers adjust their instruction to meet the needs of the learners rather than expecting the learners to adjust to their teaching. High-quality instruction is useful in several ways: It motivates and challenges the students, requires the students to acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and dispositions, and allows for the students to demonstrate their

progress. For students who are not able to meet academic and behavioral benchmarks with simple differentiation or for students who have already met or exceeded the benchmarks, high-quality instruction provides appropriate interventions. These interventions can include targeted support, scaffolding, additional practice, enrichment, compacting, or acceleration. Determining which differentiated learning opportunities or interventions best match student needs is accomplished by assessing student progress.

Continuous Review of Student Progress. The relationship between assessment and instruction is well documented. For example, Wiggins (1998) stated that school-based assessment should aim mainly to improve student performance. Danielson (2007) noted that effective teachers actively and systematically elicit information about students' understanding in order to monitor their progress and make instructional decisions. It's this link between assessment and instruction that makes it evident why the second key component in the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's RtI framework is continuous review

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of student progress using a balanced assessment system.

This balanced assessment system includes sound summative, benchmark, and formative measures that Wisconsin school districts select to provide a complete and clear picture of students' strengths and challenges. McTighe (2008) referred to this system as creating a "photo album" of a student rather than simply taking a "snapshot." In this approach, multiple sources of evidence are gathered over time, each type serving a particular purpose. Summative assessments are large-scale and are used to determine how groups of students, school districts, and the states are progressing. They inform curriculum decisions and determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Examples of summative assessments include state testing systems and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Benchmark assessments, such as district common assessments, help determine to what extent students are progressing and how well a program is working. Formative assessments are ongoing and are administered on a daily basis in the classroom. They are used to consider what learning comes next for students and to make timely adjustments in instruction. Formative assessments should include authentic performance tasks as well as other types of assessments, such as tests, quizzes, journals, presentations, and so on (Wiggins, 1998).

Continuous review of student progress draws on a balanced assessment system as a framework for constant inquiry to determine: (a) what students know and can do (screening); (b) how students are responding to differentiated, core instruction (ongoing assessment); and (c) how students are responding to interventions (progress monitoring). Screening precedes instruction. It may be summative

(e.g., standardized achievement tests), benchmark (e.g., common assessments), or formative (e.g., spelling pretest or KWL chart). The purpose of screening measures is to assess what students already know and understand and what they can already do. This information guides decisions about how to differentiate the core curriculum. Teachers are able to determine how they might scaffold learning opportunities to provide struggling students the support to be successful or to provide advanced students additional challenge.

Ongoing assessment is most commonly formative. Teachers frequently use different methods to determine the effectiveness of the differentiation they planned. They may use strategies such as thumbs-up-thumbs-down, quizzes, or oral summaries to ascertain whether students are learning. If students are responding to the strategy being used, it is continued. If students are not responding to the strategy, teachers make adjustments.

Progress monitoring is aimed at students who require interventions beyond the core curriculum, whether it is additional support for struggling students or additional challenge for high-ability students. Individual student targets are set, instructional strategies are outlined, and progress is closely watched. Daily, formative assessments are used to determine whether students are responding to the intervention and whether anticipated progress is being made. Benchmark, diagnostic assessments (e.g., DIBELS and running records) also can add to the information about student progress. Adjustments to instruction and changes in interventions are made as warranted.

Collaboration. Collaboration is key to making these instructional decisions. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction believes that col-

laboration is the third component of a successful RtI system. It is important that all staff members have a shared sense of responsibility to increase academic and behavioral growth for every student and a shared sense of accountability for student achievement. The literature makes a strong connection between collaboration and high-quality instruction for *all* students, a relationship that Wisconsin's RtI framework emphasizes. These collaborative efforts have a positive impact on student achievement (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Zehr, 2006). The literature also suggests that collaboration is an essential element of school change (Gajda & Koliba, 2008). Because RtI represents a systems change, this finding is important. In these times of budget challenges, collaborative approaches can maximize staffing and community resources to support all students.

In Wisconsin's Response to Intervention/Instruction model, teams of educators collaborate using student assessment data to plan and monitor academic and behavioral instruction and intervention. Parents and community partners also are involved in planning decisions and in supporting students. Many schools in the state have a formal collaborative decision-making team. It's important that the composition of this group is fluid based on the academic and behavioral needs of the students. In one instance, the team might consist of the classroom teacher, the gifted and talented coordinator, the parents, and the school counselor. In another instance, it might consist of the classroom teacher, the special education teacher, the principal, the parents, and a mentor from the local Big Brothers-Big Sisters agency. In yet another instance, the team might consist of the classroom teacher and the reading teacher. Collaboration also can occur on an informal basis, such as when two

classroom teachers discuss the needs of a student that they both have.

In Wisconsin, the question asked is, "What systems can be put in place so schools are responsive to *all* learners?" The Wisconsin DPI believes that the answer lies in Response to Intervention/Instruction. RtI is a PK-12 initiative for high-quality instruction, continuous review of student progress using a balanced assessment system, and collaboration that has applications for all education: general education, special education, English language learner education, and gifted education.

Other State Models

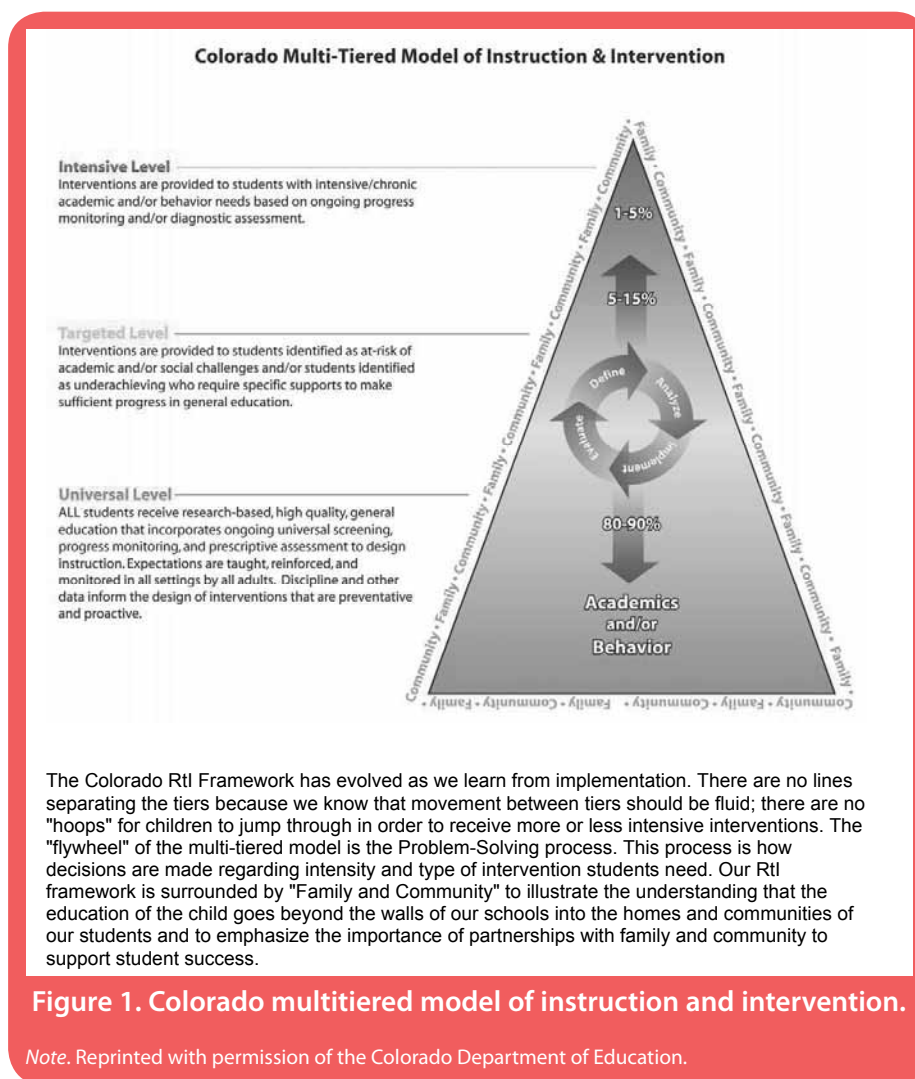
Other state models also have included gifted in their RtI models. With the exception of Ohio, the following states serve gifted students within special education regulations.

Colorado. Colorado includes gifted in its definition of RtI: "Response to Intervention is a framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, compensatory, gifted, and special education in providing high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs" (Colorado Department of Education, n.d., para. 1). In a document entitled, "Response to Intervention—Gifted Education Thinking Points" (Colorado Department of Education, 2006), Colorado identifies the rationale for including gifted and talented students in its model. Gifted students are not viewed as part of the RtI model only if they have an identified disability, but instead are a part of the overall systemic program that incorporates interventions in areas of strengths as well. The state of Colorado stresses that all aspects of education—compensatory education, special education, and

gifted education—can be operated as a seamless, unified system (Colorado Department of Education, 2009).

Colorado presents RtI in three tiers (Colorado Department of Education, n.d.; see Figure 1). The Universal Tier uses research-based strategies that are systematic, explicit, and differentiated. The Targeted Tier involves small groups or individual instruction that includes factors such as giftedness. The Intensive Tier provides intensive instruction designed to meet unique learner needs. Colorado's model pyramid shows no lines between the tiers to emphasize the fluidity between them. It also shows a problem-solving "flywheel" in the center of the pyramid to represent how decisions are made regarding intensity and the types of interventions needed by students. In addition, the words "Family" and "Community" surround the pyramid to represent the importance of partnerships outside the walls of the school.

Ohio. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has developed a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports that includes gifted and talented students (Ohio Department of Education, 2007a; see Table 1). An important feature of Ohio's model is the inclusion of interventions for students who show strengths at an advanced grade level and require more accelerated strategies. At Tier 1, "Foundation" or "Schoolwide Interventions," instructional and support systems for all students are provided. At this intervention level, suggestions such as advanced educational options, curriculum compacting, and postsecondary enrollment, which may benefit a system's advanced learners, are given. At Tier 2, "Early Targeted Instructional and Support Interventions," gifted and talented students are provided with interventions such as early graduation, advanced placement, and acceleration. Tier 3,



"Intensive Interventions," provides support for students with extensive needs. School-based and community-based resources, such as afterschool programs and counseling, are provided to enhance the school-family-community partnerships along with radical acceleration options for the very highest level students. Interventions are offered for twice-exceptional students at each intervention level (ODE, 2007b, p. 81).

Utah. Utah provides a Four-Tier Model for Gifted and Talented Instruction that provides a framework for providing quality instruction for students from kindergarten through high school (Utah State Office of Education, n.d.). Tier 1 provides challenging

instruction, including content, process, and products, for all students. Emphasis is placed on self-directed learning, which might include flexible instructional grouping, open-ended assignments, and enrichment such as guest speakers and field trips. Tier 2 allows for exploration in areas of strengths and interests through individual and small-group work, and is beyond the required core curriculum for many students. More complex knowledge is emphasized, such as problem-based learning, future studies, debate, and competitions. Also included is exposure to inquiry experiences and more focused enrichment such as contracting and compacting. Tier 3 offers specialized classes, independent study, and special-

Table 1
Ohio Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

Intervention/Tier	Academic Systems	Behavioral Systems
Schoolwide Interventions	Differentiated Instruction Schoolwide Enrichment Metacognitive Strategy Instruction Postsecondary Enrollment Curriculum Compacting Advanced Educational Options Learning Strategies Instruction Student-Led Conferencing	Schoolwide Counseling Respecting Differences Leadership Training Team Building Building Self-Awareness Learning Styles Futures Planning Cooperative Learning Metacognitive Strategies
Support Interventions	Acceleration Mentorships Independent Study Distance Learning Coursework Advanced Placement Early Graduation	Counseling—Small Group Social Skills Training Leadership Training
Intensive Interventions	Afterschool Programs Radical Acceleration	Counseling—Intensive

ized programs provided by the school or by outside agencies for some students. More sophisticated instruction is offered by individuals with specialized training with gifted and talented students and/or more specialized content areas such as pull-out programs, cluster classrooms, self-contained classrooms, honors classes, concurrent enrollment, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate. Tier 4 is used by only a few students and is custom designed for meeting individual needs through advanced, high-level instruction, including radical acceleration, early entrance to high school or college, individual advisement, magnet programs, mentorships, and internships.

Hawaii. Although Hawaii does mention gifted occasionally in the explanation of services through RtI, there is no specific reference to gifted students and how they would be served individually in an RtI model. However, within Hawaii's Comprehensive Student Support System, several criti-

cal elements specifically address gifted students (Hawaii State Department of Education, 2003). For example, one element, Classroom Climate and Differentiated Instruction, supports all students' learning and progress. This element includes the recognition of a student's background of experiences, as well as the use of effective instructional strategies that address individual learning styles and capitalize on the strengths of students in the classroom. One academic plan for the 2009–2010 year suggests that teachers are expected to provide differentiation and support services so that more students will achieve or exceed proficiency in reading and math. This intervention includes differentiated reading material equal to a child's abilities and interests, as well as providing leveled problems and enrichment activities in math (Hale Kula Elementary School, 2009). In another element, Individualized School and Community Based Programs, programs beyond the regu-

lar classroom are emphasized, with an example focused on gifted and talented students (Hawaii State Department of Education, 2003).

Summary of Model Components

Although this list of states that consider gifted students within their specific RtI model or within their school support systems is not comprehensive, it does suggest that possibilities exist for addressing both abilities and disabilities of students. Similarities include (a) differentiated instruction within the first tier, (b) instruction beyond grade level, (c) more intense services not only within the school but beyond the school setting, (d) a balanced assessment system, and (e) gifted education teachers in the decision-making process. Overall, these models emphasize that gifted students have educational needs that should be met with equally intense instruction similar to students with disabilities.

Assessing Your School's RtI Model in Providing for Gifted Students

In examining your school's RtI model, you may want to use the checklist in Figure 2 to determine if it considers gifted and talented students. In general, you will want to examine the overall model, monitoring student progress, tiered levels of service, curriculum and instructional practices, and collaboration.

The more times you answered "yes" to each of the questions, the more likely it is that you may have a model in your school that is inclusionary of gifted and talented students. However, if your model focuses primarily on students with disabilities, you may want to involve stakeholders who might be able to broaden the focus of the services

(e.g., general education teachers, special education teachers, gifted education teachers, administrators, parents, and community members). Use this checklist and the models presented in this article to begin the conversation.

Summary

The reauthorization of Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 2004 included several significant changes. One key revision was the process for identifying specific learning disabilities. Prior to 2004, students were referred for special education services based on a discrepancy model. Students were identified with a learning disability only when there was a large difference between their intellectual ability and their achievement test scores. Students generally had to fail for long periods of time before they showed sufficiently large deficits in academic achievement to satisfy the “severe discrepancy” requirement and begin receiving special education services (Cortiella, 2006). IDEA 2004 removed the requirement for school districts to use the formula for severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and academic achievement. They were given the option of addressing academic failure early by frequently monitoring student performance and implementing increasingly intensive research-based instructional interventions for children who continued to have difficulty. This early intervention system emphasized improving student performance through collaboration among classroom teachers, special education teachers, and other support professionals (Cortiella, 2006). This model, known as Response to Intervention (RtI), meant that children no longer had to “wait to fail” before they received help.

Overall Model

- _____ Does your school use an RtI model that focuses on problem solving?
- _____ Is your school's model flexible?

Monitoring Student Progress

- _____ Do you collect data on the students' strengths as well as weaknesses?
- _____ Do assessments have an adequate ceiling so that advanced students' growth can be measured?

Tiered Levels of Service

- _____ Are services at each level based on student need rather than student label?
- _____ Are services provided to nurture potential in young children (particularly those from historically underrepresented populations) prior to formal identification as gifted?
- _____ Is the Tier 1 curriculum rigorous enough for gifted and academically advanced students?
- _____ Are above-grade-level tiers of service available to academically advanced or gifted students?
- _____ Do interventions for gifted students include networks and mentors in the community?
- _____ Are students able to receive both special education and gifted education services?

Curriculum and Instructional Practices

- _____ Does differentiation occur at each tier?
- _____ Does the school allow above-grade-level curricular interventions?
- _____ Does your school use Individual Learning Plans for academically advanced or gifted students?

Collaboration

- _____ Are families actively involved in the collaborative planning process?
- _____ Does the collaborative RtI team include educators in gifted education?
- _____ Does professional development include information about advanced students?
- _____ Are teachers trained to use evidence-based strategies in gifted education such as acceleration, content extensions, high-level problem solving, and ability grouping?
- _____ Do administrators in your district support the inclusion of gifted or academically advanced students in the RtI model?

Figure 2. Assessing your school's RtI model in providing for gifted students.

Because the federal government does not require a specific model, each state has been able to design and implement its own RtI model. Although the majority of states have focused primarily on students with disabilities, some have designed models that are inclusive of gifted students. These inclusive models generally use a problem-solving approach that contains these elements: (1) differentiated core curriculum and instruction in the first tier with high-end learning

opportunities; (2) ongoing assessment and systematic observation; and (3) monitoring of students and increasing levels of individualized services and support within and outside the school settings based on assessment information and collaboration between general, special, and gifted education teachers. Designers of these models acknowledge that implementing RtI models that positively affect *all* students take time and represent a systems change.

Response to Intervention does not have to be just for students with disabilities. It can serve as a model for increasing the quality and level of services for *all* students and become more responsive to gifted and talented students. Although RtI was originally conceived of as an approach for the early identification of students with learning disabilities, it is now widely viewed as a framework for reform across general and special education. Practitioners, researchers, and community leaders in gifted education need to work together to ensure that policy makers and legislators understand the power of RtI and its ability to transform the nature of the general education classroom. Assessing the degree to which your school's RtI model provides for gifted students is an important first step toward this change. **GCT**

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RtI for Nurturing Giftedness: Implications for the RtI School-Based Team

The first-grade team of Mr. Orton, Ms. Poland, and Ms. Lloyd are meeting to review DIBELS scores on the third-grade reading tests that were administered at the beginning of the year. It's the end of September, and they're meeting for the first time to initiate the process known as RtI. In their district, it's known as Responsiveness to Intervention, and the school's assistant principal, Ms. Tracy, is leading the team. Ms. Tracy instructs them to rank the 92 scores from lowest to highest. The teachers have done so, and they are examining the needs of their bottom 25%, about 24 students. Ms. Poland notes that even among these lower students, there are about seven of them whose scores are significantly lower than the groups and whose reading is of great concern. Ms. Weichel, the special education teacher who collaborates with both Mr. Orton's and Ms. Lloyd's classes, has been asked to include these seven students when she works with the students with identified learning disabilities. She has a reduced special education caseload so that she can engage in this RtI process and work on a short-term basis with these Tier 3 students. She is

by Claire E. Hughes and Karen Rollins

going to try some short-term interventions for about 6 weeks and document the students' responses to these interventions, focusing on measuring the students' fluency rates and comprehension because those areas seem to be of greatest concern. In addition, the first-grade teachers have agreed to focus on the 17 other students and emphasize specific reading concepts to them, focusing specific questions and activities to these identified students in Tier 2. The team hopes that with the assistance of Ms. Weichel and the focused instruction, the students' performance can improve, and a follow-up team meeting is scheduled for mid-November.

Just as the group is breaking up, Mr. Orton looked at the ranked test scores and noted that there were five students whose reading scores were significantly ahead of their peers' and a significant number of students whose test scores were above the average. "Wait!" he called out to his fellow team members, "Why don't we do something for these students? Don't we want ALL of our students to improve?"

An Issue of "Fairness"

As in the preceding scenario, if such attention is to be given to low-achieving students, a similar focus must be placed on students whose initial performance is higher than other students. Without the same focus, these students' achievement over time may suffer due to the little educational effort that historically has been placed on raising the achievement level of students who are outperforming their peers. Studies that track students over time, particularly students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Wyner, Bridgeland, & DiIulio, 2007), find that such early performers slip and do not maintain their achievement levels, and in many cases, perform more and more poorly over time. Shouldn't *falling* achievement warrant such attention as well,

particularly among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds?

If education is to focus on developing student abilities and providing an educated work force, then it also must focus on the growth and achievement for all students—where “all” truly does mean *all*. In the face of changing educational policies and processes, such as RtI, it is critically important that teachers and advocates for gifted education come to the table to insist that the philosophy that undergirds the changes inherent in the law are addressed to meet the needs of all students. From a practical viewpoint, there are some critical similarities and differences to be addressed from a campus-level perspective. Table 1 summarizes the major RtI principles (Council for Exceptional Children, The Association for the Gifted [CEC-TAG], 2009; Fuchs & Deschler, 2007; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007) and describes how they can be implemented across all levels—to include struggling learners as well as gifted learners.

Universal Screening

If teachers were to implement RtI for gifted students, the universal screening aspect would need to identify students who were achieving at a high level. Using a parallel structure to traditional RtI, those students who score in the top 25% could warrant extra attention, perhaps needing some additional challenges or differentiated instruction. Students in the top 5% to 10% of the class would need significantly more intensive interventions. In addition, the universal screening instrument would need to include a higher level ceiling than grade-level expectations to identify those exceptional students who might be candidates for significant acceleration in certain subject areas. Overall, it would

be important as a member of an RtI team within a school to determine two points for discussions—those students performing below given criteria, and those students performing above a certain criteria. Providing teachers with a chart such as the one in Figure 1 would allow teachers to look at their class as a whole, and to focus on the two extremes: those students who are significantly ahead of their peers and those students who are significantly below their peers.

As a school system, procedures need to be in place to identify children who are performing either significantly below or significantly above their peers. Because of ceiling effects found among students who score in the 90th percentile and above and floor effects from students who score below the 15th percentile, it would be necessary to have testing procedures in place to allow specialists to offer off-grade-level testing to determine at what grade level a student is actually performing. A child in fifth grade who is scoring above the 95th percentile in math might be performing at a seventh-grade level, or even at a ninth-grade level. Similarly, a fifth-grade student who scores at the 10th percentile in math might be at the first-grade level, or he or she might not even recognize numbers. For instructional purposes for both students, it would be important to know specific knowledge and skills within the curriculum for targeting instruction. Children who are performing at either of the extreme ends must have off-level testing in order for instructional practices to match their educational levels. Such instructional approaches are the antithesis of elitism; rather, it is determining appropriate instructional intervention for every child—a goal for the changing educational landscape.

Table 1
RtI Principles and Implications for Serving the Needs of Gifted Students

RtI Principle	Traditional RtI Actions for Struggling Students	System Implications for Gifted Learners
Universal Screening	Students who score below established criteria receive intensive remedial instruction.	Scores who score above established criteria receive differentiated and advanced instruction.
Early Intervention	Students can qualify for intervening services before “waiting to fail.”	Abilities are identified within a nurturing system regardless of label or potentially biased teacher recommendations.
Tiered System of Interventions	The more intense the needs, and the farther from typical the student, the more intense and long-term the instructional interventions that are provided.	The more intense the needs, and the farther from typical the student, the more intense and long-term the instructional interventions that are provided.
Fidelity of Intervention	The student actually receives instruction geared to particular needs; not a “one-size-fits-all” remedial program.	The student actually receives instruction geared to particular needs; not a “one-size-fits-all” gifted program.
Progress Monitoring	Documented student progress has a goal of moving a child from a more intensive to a less intensive tier of intervention as a child raises achievement levels.	Documented student progress has a goal of moving a child from a less intensive to a more intensive tier of intervention as a child raises achievement levels.
Professional Development	Training is provided for specific, research-based interventions that are effective for struggling learners.	Training is provided for specific strategies of acceleration, enrichment, and differentiation that are effective with gifted learners.
Collaborative Structure	Greater collaboration is needed between special education, reading specialists, and other intervention specialists to identify and serve struggling learners.	Gifted education professionals collaborate with general education teachers to identify and serve high-achieving students in need of differentiated services.
	Greater use of collaboration and coteaching facilitates this process.	Greater possibilities for appropriate services for twice-exceptional students are available through collaborations with special education professionals.
Parental Involvement	Sharing information to and from families raises the achievement levels and effectiveness of interventions. Targeted interventions are built upon acquired information regarding interest areas and areas of strength.	Sharing information to and from families raises the achievement levels and effectiveness of interventions. Targeted interventions are built upon acquired information regarding interest areas and areas of strength.
Resources	Special education monies are freed up to serve students on a short-term basis who are not identified as having a disability.	Gifted education resources are more targeted to meet the needs of students, rather than the needs of the program.

Early Identification and Intervention

Often, gifted education is reserved for students who qualify for gifted services, not recognizing that many students may not score above a required level without some exposure to specific content and/or proper identification. In a case for early intervention, the issue of nurturing talent, especially among diverse populations, becomes primary. Simply stated, many students enter schools with lower achievement

because of extenuating circumstances, such as poverty or cultural and linguistic differences, that impact their level of achievement in a mainstream school. By waiting to provide talent development activities until students “qualify” for gifted education services, schools are ensuring that only students who have the appropriate backgrounds when they enter school receive such services. RtI promises an exciting means of nurturing talent and the potential for growth before a student qualifies.

In addition, there are many instances where students are not identified as gifted due to a “mismatch” between the identification instrument and the child’s strengths. Through an RtI delivery model that incorporates tiers for students performing above their peers in the school curriculum, you ensure that all students with potential receive services even if the designated instrument of choice from the district does not indicate qualification for gifted services. Without nurturing the strengths of gifted stu-

Reading: Rate the students in the class, with 1 being much lower, and 5 being much higher than other students in the class on the following:

Name of Student	Oral Reading	Word Attack	Vocabulary	Sight Word Vocabulary	Reading Comprehension

Math: Rate the students in the class, with 1 being much lower, and 5 being much higher than other students in the class on the following:

Name of Student	Numeration	Estimation	Money	Measurement	Geometry	Graphing	Word Problems

Writing: Rate the students in the class, with 1 being much lower, and 5 being much higher than other students in the class on the following:

Name of Student	Expressiveness	Story Length	Sticks to Topic	Creativity	Mechanics	Handwriting	Spelling

Figure 1. Universal screening.

dents, true growth cannot occur and students are in danger of not developing, and even losing, their gifts.

Most significantly, by allowing the integrated opportunities for enrichment and remediation, the needs of twice-exceptional students can be more easily met. Winebrenner (2003) suggested that when dealing with twice-exceptional students, teachers should give direct teaching of needed skills while providing acceleration and enrichment, with emphasis on problem solving, reasoning, and critical thinking. Such dual-instructional approaches become possible when all professionals in gifted education and special education and the general education classroom teachers are working together to provide instruction that matches each child's curricular needs. For example, a child might score in the 90th percentile in math, and in the 20th percentile in reading. That child could conceivably have both needs met with instruction provided by different tiers of instruction: advanced instruction

in math with reading modifications and direct instruction in reading strategies.

Tiered System of Interventions

Gifted students are an incredibly heterogeneous group (Cross, 2005), with greater diversity in achievement levels than among typical students. Thus, the idea of a one-size-fits-all gifted education program is not based upon the actual characteristics of gifted students. Historically, there has been a tremendous disconnect between the process of identification based upon characteristics and the program that is offered for gifted learners (Coleman & Gallagher, 1995). In a tiered program, teachers would be better able to more specifically meet the needs of gifted learners based on their characteristics. It is important to realize that we must differentiate within a gifted group. Even though gifted students may have been identified as gifted, there are still strengths, weaknesses, and a tremen-

dous range of actual performance levels within this group.

An important aspect to remember within the tiers of instruction are the concepts of flexibility and fluidity. Once a student has been identified as needing a different tier of instruction, whether it be for remediation or enrichment, it will be imperative to allow that child the flexibility of movement as he or she develops in the area of need. Also, in respect to movement, fluidity allows that child to move within tiers when needed. With struggling students, this movement may be up to another tier for more specific instruction and then back to a previous tier once concepts have been mastered. However, that movement may occur again if additional struggles are evident through data monitoring. With a gifted child, movement also will be important. However, this movement may not only be an upward movement to the next tier for more specific enrichment, but also additional movement as that child develops. A gifted student may stay at

this higher level tier indefinitely as part of differentiation.

Tier 1

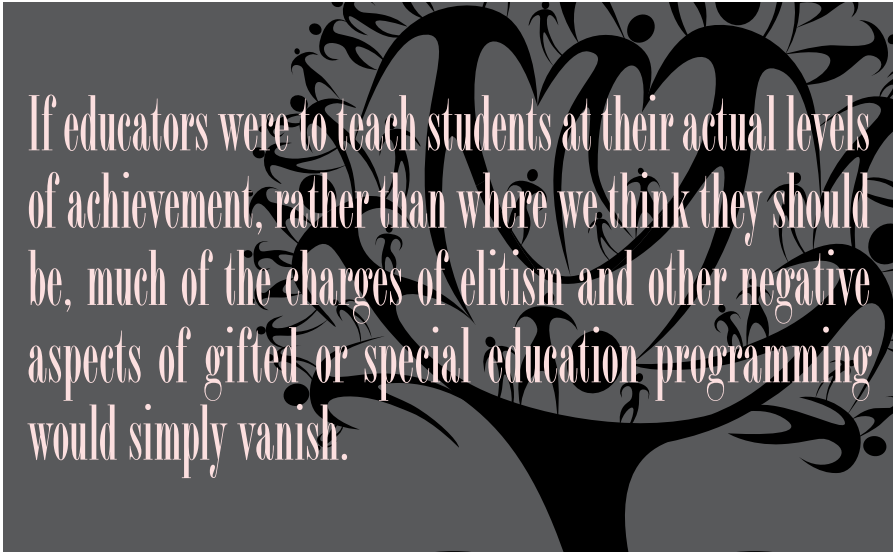
Tier 1 includes instruction that would be differentiated within the general education classroom. Using a tiered system, or menu system of instruction, or any of the other differentiation methods recommended by gifted education experts such as Kaplan, Tomlinson, and VanTassel-Baska, students would have the opportunity within the general education classroom to excel and strive for higher levels. Twice-exceptional children do well particularly within a tiered approach that allows for focused instruction that is both targeted at areas of challenge and areas of strength. One of the best practices to ensure success of twice-exceptional students is allowing them to participate in gifted instruction (Baum & Owen, 2004; Silverman, 1989), particularly if that instruction is within the same setting.

Tier 2

In Tier 2, perhaps using the assistance of a gifted education teacher, students would receive additional enrichment and/or accelerative options within specific content areas. Contracts and compacting are strategies that could be employed to provide challenging instruction in those areas of strength for a gifted child.

Tier 3

In Tier 3, perhaps the most intensive services, gifted students would receive more significant acceleration and/or gifted group activities. The criteria for such programming would be based on clearly established protocols. These protocols would establish criteria for the practice of acceleration, which



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is commonly misunderstood and even rejected by many general education teachers and administrators (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). As a student's performance grows, more and more accelerative and intensive enrichment opportunities would be provided. Examples of Tier 3 include intensive acceleration, such as skipping a grade or two, early Advanced Placement (AP) classes, or early college classes.

The issue of increasing levels of instruction as student needs grow and as student achievement levels rise raises the issue of off-level testing. A child who scores in the 95th or 99th percentile on a standardized test when compared to his or her peers has "topped" out the test. The full range of that child's knowledge or skills is still not known to teachers. Similarly, a student who makes a 100 on a curriculum-based measure or a pretest before instruction has clearly mastered that level of curriculum, but it is still not clear on what level of achievement that child is operating. In order to provide such information, it is necessary to use tests and measures that are designed for an above-grade-level population to know that child's actual level of performance. The actual level of performance can

more clearly help teachers know where to begin teaching. Programs such as the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) have been organized around this principle for years. If educators were to teach students at their actual levels of achievement, rather than where we think they should be, much of the charges of elitism and other negative aspects of gifted or special education programming would simply vanish.

Fidelity of Intervention

Ensuring the fidelity of intervention, or a systematic procedure that is clearly followed for all students, ensures two important aspects: (a) Curricular interventions are selected based upon data-based decisions and are related to identifiable, measurable gifted characteristics; and (b) educators are held accountable for presenting the instruction in a manner that reflects best teaching practices. The issue of bias and potential bias of identification in gifted education is one that is rampant throughout the literature (Coleman, 2003; Coleman & Gallagher, 1995). With the inclusion of data, and the fidelity of instruction, the issue of bias is removed.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring is the systematic gathering of data to evaluate the progress of a child. For a teacher, it means knowing how one will evaluate a child on a particular set of skills over time. It may mean repeating a set of curriculum-based measures, or using a more standardized test over the course of several weeks. Progress monitoring is key to the process of Tiers 1 and 2. In a remedial-focused RtI, students often are only in Tier 2 for a specified amount of time before either (a) their needs are remediated and they are moved back to Tier 1, or (b) more long-term solutions are needed and they are served in Tier 3 or special education. The goal in a remedial program, clearly, is to raise student achievement to the level of his or her peers and to receive instruction in the general education classroom, or Tier 1. However, in a strengths-based RtI, the goal is to raise achievement *beyond* the general education classroom. Thus, students should not simply “pass through” Tier 2, but should perhaps remain in this tier as a learning objective. Heightened achievement gains that are achieved in Tier 2 should be maintained and encouraged. Progress monitoring is critical to this process of determining how much a student’s achievement levels are changing over time. With the goal being achievement gains for all students, progress monitoring is key to measuring that goal.

Professional Development

With the passage of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008), which requires all teacher preparation programs to contain information about teaching gifted learners, among other populations, there is significant inter-

est in the content that teachers will learn regarding characteristics and the implications for the education of gifted learners. The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) currently is examining the core knowledge that would be considered essential for general education teachers. However, although it is acknowledged that the majority of gifted children spend most of their time in general education classrooms, there is a set of core knowledge and skills that The Association for the Gifted, Council for Exceptional Children (CEC-TAG); NAGC; and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) programs have recently provided for the education of teachers of gifted students (Johnsen, VanTassel-Baska, & Robinson, 2008; Kitano, Montgomery, VanTassel-Baska, & Johnsen, 2008). Thus, there is a set of guidelines for professional development opportunities for a district to follow in selecting and training teachers of gifted students.

Collaborative Structure

Perhaps the area of greatest potential to aid the classroom teacher in

the RtI model is in the area of collaboration. Collaboration as a service delivery option currently exists in special education and holds great promise for RtI as a means of identifying and serving students who need additional interventions (Murawski & Hughes, 2009). There is great potential for gifted educators to be tapped as resources in order to better enable the general education teacher to meet the needs of potentially strong students. Gifted education teachers can gather data, provide ongoing assessment, and provide services for students at multiple tiers, such as direct acceleration and enrichment activities, to students showing a need for these services. Significant research indicates that within a general education setting, little to no differentiation for high-achieving students occurs on a regular, systematic basis (Tomlinson, 2008). With the collaboration of a gifted education professional, such differentiation can occur, and counter the argument of “I just don’t have time or know how to meet everyone’s needs,” which is a concern for many general education teachers.

In addition to the services that gifted education teachers can provide within

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a general education setting, gifted education teachers also can provide more intensive direct services in a Tier 3 setting. Some school districts may opt for accelerative or self-contained settings for gifted students who significantly exceed the achievement level of their peers and need to continue to grow and achieve. Ensuring such growth for students who are two to five grade levels ahead of their peers would require school districts to truly provide appropriate education for all—one that emphasizes growth for all.

Finally, one of the strongest aspects of the collaborative process is the ability to meet the needs of twice-exceptional learners, or gifted students with disabilities. Twice-exceptional students are directly cited in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 1990) as a population that must have their diverse needs met. In other words, states and districts do not have the option to only meet the remedial needs of twice-exceptional students; they *must* develop the child's abilities as well. In fact, in the case of twice-exceptional students, it is imperative to develop strengths while remediating, because remediation alone does not build self-efficacy as found in students with learning disabilities (Little, 2001). With such a legal mandate pressuring states and districts, gifted education professionals have an opportunity to engage with special educators and general educators in a problem-solving process that can produce a coherent instructional approach, rather than the often disjointed educational patchwork that emerges with twice-exceptional learners (Hughes, 2009). Similarly, such opportunities for collaboration exist for gifted English language learners (ELL) and Title I populations. Providing a vehicle for collaboration through RtI can ensure the profes-

sional respect of a gifted education teacher, and consequently, the field.

Parental Involvement

One of the keys to the success of RtI is developing strategies that are effective for a particular student. In order to link content to a student, it is critical to know the interests and strengths of a particular child, whether the interventions be of a remedial nature (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005) or of an enrichment nature (Reis, Burns, & Renzulli, 1992). Parents, clearly, have a valued perspective on an individual child's strengths and interests. In addition, the family, if it has worked with an educational system for some length of time, will have a clearer idea of strategies that have been tried and found effective with the child in the past than a teacher developing a plan with limited experience with a child.

In addition to providing information to educators, parents also are ultimately responsible for their child's education, and as such, can glean information from educators about choices possible for their child. Through teamwork, educators and parents can work together to meet the high level needs of students with the right to learn even if that learning is beyond their age peers.

RtI Process

There are four essential determinations to make when creating a Response to Intervention plan, whether the focus be on a child who is falling behind or a child who is ahead of his or her peers. These include strategies to: (a) determine the need, (b) determine the intervention, (c) determine the progress, and (d) determine the decision-making

criteria. Each of these four areas involves all members of the team. This team might consist of administrators, the classroom teacher, the instructional specialist, the intervention teacher, the gifted education teacher, parents, the school psychologist, whoever will be examining student growth, or anyone else who has a vested interest in the success of the child. It is not recommended that students who are ahead of their peers have a separate process from students who are falling behind their peers. All members of the team should undertake the same challenge of "How can we assist this child in making achievement gains when the standard curriculum is not appropriate to do so?"—whether it be a struggling child or a high-achieving child.

Ms. Tracy, Mr. Orton, Ms. Poland, and Ms. Lloyd met again the next day to identify particular students for intervention purposes with a goal of increasing achievement for all students. Ms. Weichel, the special education teacher, and Ms. Joyce, the gifted education teacher, also were present so that they could lend their specialized knowledge to the formulation of intervention plans. Following an agenda such as the one shown in Figure 2, the meeting lasted about 2 hours, and at the end of the process, a set of both remedial and accelerated opportunities for students with difficulties and strengths were identified.

Conclusions and Implications

Because implementation of RtI in the framework of special education's identification process still is relatively new, many districts are only now determining the implications at the school or system level. In fact, in some districts these discussions may not be

Present: Administrator, General Education Classroom Teacher, Special Educator, Gifted Educator, Parents, School Psychologist. One of these person is, on a rotating basis, assigned the role of meeting facilitator and chairperson. Other meeting roles might include timekeeper, case manager, and recorder (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2007).

Review Baseline Data (5 Minutes)

Goals

To determine starting point/levels within the academic or behavioral targeted area of concern.

Sample Questions

- Where is the student currently functioning, according to the information provided?
- Is there anything significant in the student's history that needs to be discussed?

Discussion of Teacher Observations of Particular Students (10 Minutes)

Sample Question

- Given the information, what are specific issues or problems we can address today for each student?

Inventory Student Strengths, Talents, and Specific Areas of Challenge (10 Minutes)

Goals

- Discuss and record the student's strengths, talents, and areas of difficulty.
- Discuss incentives that motivate the student.

Sample Questions

- What rewards or incentives does this child seem to look forward to?
- What are some things that this student enjoys or does well?

Select Target Areas (5–10 Minutes)

Goals

- Define the top one to two areas for remediation or acceleration in easily observable, measurable terms.
- Identify the presence of underlying academic skill or deficits, mismatch between student skills and classroom instruction.

Set Academic and/or Behavioral Goals (15–20 Minutes)

Goal

- For each of the academic areas, set ambitious but realistic goals that are attainable in 6–8 weeks.

Sample Question

- Given the student's current functioning, at what level would you like to see him or her after a 6–8 week intervention period?

Design an Intervention Plan (15–20 Minutes)

Goals

- Select at least one intervention that addresses each of the selected referral areas.

- Spell out the particulars of the intervention as a series of specific steps so that the teacher or other person(s) involved can do so efficiently and correctly.

Sample Questions

- What intervention ideas would best meet this student's needs?
- What is it about this particular intervention that is likely to improve the student's behavior or academic functioning?
- Is there specialized training or materials that you feel are needed to carry out this intervention?

Method of Monitoring Progress (5 Minutes)

Goal

- Each goal must have a method of assessing and monitoring progress.

Sample Questions

- Does the monitoring information really measure the teacher's concerns?
- Who will collect the monitoring information?
- How frequently should the data be collected?

Plan How to Share Meeting Information With The Student's Parents (if They Did Not Attend; 5 Minutes)

Goal

- Agree on who will contact the parents to share the student's intervention plan and invite the parents to a future RTI meeting.

Sample Questions

- What specific details about the intervention would be of greatest interest to the parents?

Review the Intervention and Monitoring Plans (5 Minutes)

Goal

- Review the main points of the intervention and monitoring plans with the teachers involved and other team members.

Sample Questions

- Do the members of our team know what their responsibilities are in carrying out the intervention and monitoring plans for these students?
- Is our team able to support the teachers?
- Did our team help the teacher assemble a good intervention plan that is feasible and can be carried out with currently available resources?
- How will we determine fidelity of implementation?

Determine Date and Purpose of Next Meeting to Evaluate Progress (5 Minutes)

Goals

- Determine criteria for successful achievement.
- Determine length of time for monitoring of progress.

Sample Questions

- What will be the criteria for change of tier or placement?
- What will "appropriate achievement gain" mean?

Figure 2. Sample Rtl team meeting agenda.

taking place. The concept of also identifying students who show promise in a nurturing framework, as opposed to a preventative framework, is even newer still. However, many of the school-level issues are similar. Teachers need to know (a) how to identify students for whom the standard curriculum is not appropriate for reasonable achievement growth, (b) how to find resources and provide differentiated activities, (c) what other alternatives are available if longer term issues are involved, (d) how to use data to make instructional decisions, and (e) how to collaborate effectively with other members of the educational community to meet the varied needs of students. These issues are the same whether the child is initially below the standard, grade-level curriculum or above it.

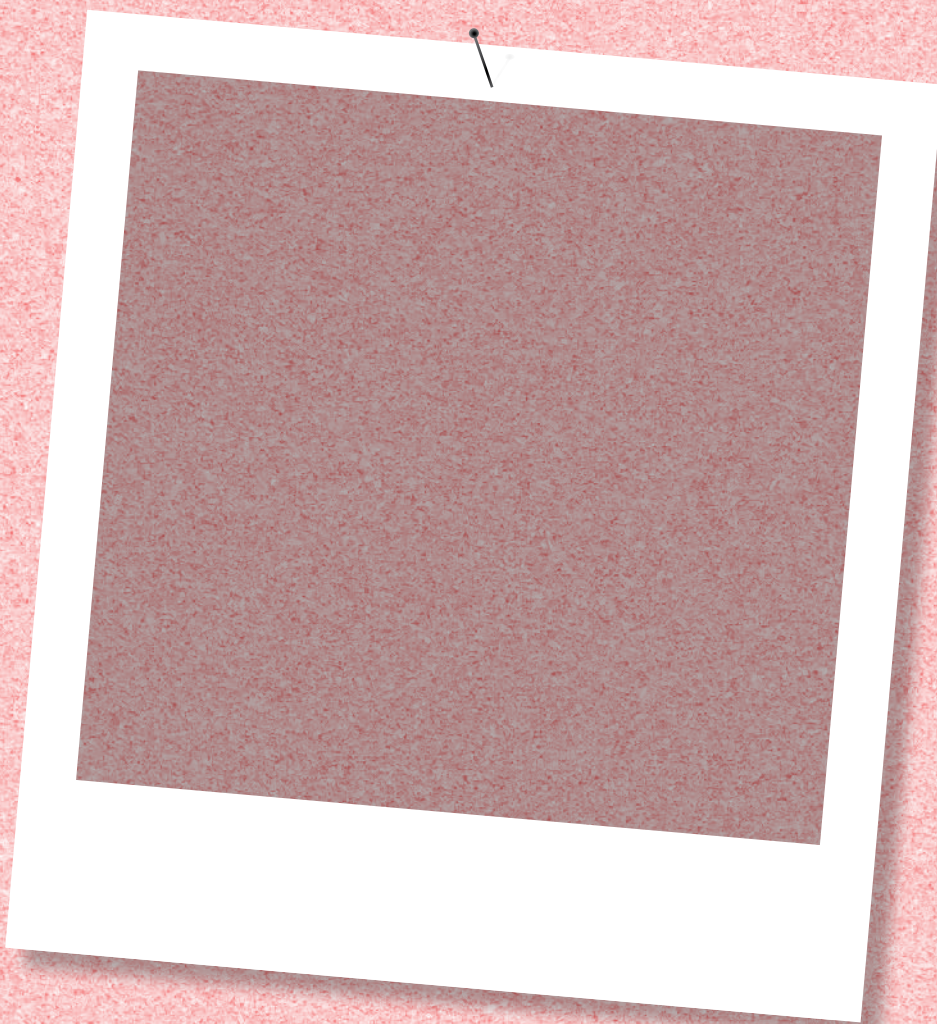
The most critical difference between the RtI framework for special education identification purposes and for gifted education purposes is that the goal of remediation is to make children more similar to other children, whereas the goal of nurturing strengths is to make children more different. There will be “closing of the gap” in a remedial-based RtI Model if student strengths are ignored and the top is left to remain static while the lower achieving student grow and develop. However, in an RtI model, where there also is a strength-based emphasis, the gap between the lowest students and the highest students should expand if no cap is placed on student achievement. All students should have opportunities to make continual growth. At this time in our educational history, RtI provides a means of making that happen. As education shifts in a way to allow struggling students to grow and develop, so must gifted students be allowed to develop and learn as well.

GCT

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Response to Intervention and Twice-Exceptional Learners: A Promising Fit



**by Daphne A. Pereles,
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Many books and articles have been written about a Response to Intervention (RtI) model of service delivery for students who are struggling learners. However, little has been written about this model's usefulness as a means of addressing the needs of advanced learners or twice-exceptional learners whose needs may be both remedial and advanced. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) define Response to Intervention as the "practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions" (NASDSE, 2005, p. 3). It further states that this practice should be used in "general, remedial, and special education" (NASDSE, 2005, p. 3). The NASDE document does not address gifted children, nor does it define "high-quality instruction" as opportunities for acceleration or enrichment.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has a definition broader in nature and inclusive of all students. It defines RtI as "a framework that promotes a well-integrated system connecting general, compensatory, gifted, and special education in providing high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs" (CDE, 2008, p. 3). This definition allows for broader application of the foundational principles of an RtI model that truly includes all students and can be an effective means of addressing the complex needs of twice-exceptional learners. In its Position Paper on Response to Intervention, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC; 2002) stated that RtI

shall consider the educational needs of children with gifts and talents and their families, particularly related to the identification of children considered to be twice exceptional because they have gifts and talents as well as a disability. These advanced learners shall be provided access to a challenging and accelerated curriculum, while also addressing the unique needs of their disability. (p. 2)

In this article, we will discuss why we feel that the RtI model that includes a problem-solving/consultation process is a promising fit for the twice-exceptional student. We will describe the theoretical and practical implications for these special students and then take the reader through each element of the problem-solving/consultation process by discussing a case study of a gifted student who has both learning and behavioral challenges.

Implication of Educational Labels

The school population mirrors the population at large with respect to diversity in language, ethnicity, culture, and ability/disability. It has become increasingly difficult to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners (Cole, 2008). In our effort to categorize and make meaning of these challenges, identification systems were created and the practice of assigning labels to students with special needs has become a vehicle for providing services. These identification systems were created for all of the right reasons—opening doors for funding, raising awareness and understanding, improving communication between professionals and families, and providing a social identity (Lauchlan & Boyle,

2007). However, this also resulted in a disconnected group of isolated programs or “silos” created around student labels. Students began to be assigned to a set “program” based on the label and not always based on an identified educational need (NASDSE, 2005). Because of their unique learning needs, twice-exceptional students never have fit neatly into any of the usual programs in a school system. Their needs have always challenged personnel in this disconnected system of silos and contributed to their difficulty of achieving success.

With the advent of RtI, the need to assign labels to students changes. A label is not required for students to receive interventions and support. The responsibility for student success becomes a shared responsibility within a supportive professional environment. Because RtI is structured around the assessed educational needs of students and not the attainment of a label, it is difficult to discuss the framework in regard to a specific, labeled group of students. Applying an older way of systemic thinking onto the RtI model is in a way “force-fitting” the merger of two paradigms that actually need to be considered in different ways. This step, however, is necessary to create a bridge for practitioners to comprehend the application of RtI philosophy and to understand how it differs from current practice. Resolving this dilemma provided a unique challenge for the authors of this article. Because of this, for the purposes of this article, the term *twice-exceptional student* is being used to denote students displaying behaviors and characteristics associated with giftedness and the spectrum of disabilities.

In 1981, Renzulli, Reis, and Smith recommended labeling student behaviors rather than labeling students as “gifted.” Labeling behaviors helps decision makers develop appropriate

educational plans that match individual student strengths, interests, and abilities. The gifted label itself did not help teachers select appropriate educational programming options for these students. Given the dozens of characteristics and traits associated with giftedness and the personality and environmental factors that affect the development of these characteristics and traits, it is safe to say that those who are identified for gifted education services compose a heterogeneous group. Labeling a group infers homogeneity of the group. Definitions of giftedness and talent and identification processes vary greatly between states and often between districts within a state. Generalized, stereotypical characteristics assigned to a label cannot reflect the range of characteristics, nor can the levels or degrees of those characteristics be adequately captured. These stereotypes combined with generalized, prescribed instructional strategies result in an illusion that appropriate instruction is occurring and ignores the range of diversity in each labeled “group.”

We believe that the move away from labeling is part of the inevitable evolution of the field. All areas of education evolve and reform over time. Healey (2005) provided a historical context for changes in special education. He identified the early 1970s as a time when different groups (parents, educators, legislators) moved with determination to reform special education. These combined efforts resulted in the historic Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Through periodic reauthorizations, the law changed to reflect current theory, practice, and research. Truscott, Catanese, and Abrams (2005) reported concerns and research that led to current calls for “radical special education

Principle One	All children can learn and achieve high standards if given access to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum and research-based instruction.
Principle Two	Intervening at the earliest indication of need is necessary to ensure student success.
Principle Three	A comprehensive system of tiered interventions is essential for addressing the full range of student needs.
Principle Four	Student results improve when ongoing academic and behavioral performance data inform instructional decisions.
Principle Five	Collaboration among educators, families, and community members is the foundation for effective problem solving and instructional decision-making.
Principle Six	Ongoing and meaningful family engagement increases the successful outcomes for students.

Figure 1. Core Principles of a Response to Intervention Model

Note. Adapted from Colorado Department of Education (2009).

reform” (p. 164). It is the nature of the development of a field to experience change. Radical changes in the education of students with special needs began in the 1970s, affecting both special and general education and, indirectly, the field of gifted education as well. With the most current reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004, we are experiencing a change that has the potential to impact education to the same degree that Public Law 94-142 did. This is due to the significant shift in the identification of specific learning disabilities (SLD) within the law.

Consensus reports and empirical syntheses indicate a need for major changes in the approach to identifying children with SLD. Models that incorporate RtI represent a shift in special education toward goals of better achievement and improved behavioral outcomes for children with SLD. (Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities, 2006, p. 46647)

Core Principles of RtI

Because of the complexity and needs-based nature of RtI, there are a number of different models in practice. Regardless of the model, there is an underlying set of common core principles or beliefs that guide successful practice (see Figure 1). These principles, listed below, were adapted from a list developed by the Colorado Department of Education and were based on a review of the literature on RtI, as well as practical application of these principles. The intent of this section is to address these principles and discuss how RtI is an excellent way to address the needs of all students and, within that context, the needs of twice-exceptional students.

Principle One: All Students Can Learn

The first principle is the belief that if given access to a rigorous, standards-based curriculum and research-based instruction, all students, including twice-exceptional ones, can learn and

achieve. Effective instructional strategies are the hallmark of gifted education. Researchers at Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) have identified nine instructional strategies through a theory-based meta-analysis. These strategies have a “high probability of enhancing student achievement for all students in all subject areas at all grade levels” (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001, p. 7) and provide some guidance and direction for improving instructional practices in classrooms. These strategies are listed in order of highest to lowest effect:

1. identifying similarities and differences;
2. summarizing and note taking;
3. reinforcing effort and providing recognition;
4. homework and practice;
5. nonlinguistic representations;
6. cooperative learning;
7. setting objectives and providing feedback;
8. generating and testing hypotheses; and
9. questions, cues, and advance organizers (Marzano et al., 2001, p. 7).

These research-based instructional strategies are ones that benefit all students when used consistently in the general classroom. This type of instructional consistency benefits twice-exceptional students in particular because they are more successful in an environment with clear expectations, guidance, and opportunities to problem solve. These instructional strategies, used in conjunction with the Gifted Program Standards developed and released by the National Association for Gifted Children (Landrum & Shaklee, 1988), provide a consistent framework to address the needs of gifted students in all educational settings. These standards support an examination of the quality of

programming for gifted learners and include both minimum standards and exemplary standards in seven key areas. They serve as a way for districts to set benchmarks and evaluate their programs for gifted learners. A combination of research-based instructional strategies and the Gifted Program Standards can contribute to the development of a solid universal tier of instruction for school systems utilizing an RtI framework.

Principle Two: Early Intervention

A second guiding principle is the idea that intervening at the earliest indication of need is necessary to ensure student success (CDE, 2008). In the case of twice-exceptional students, a significant educational need, whether for acceleration, enrichment, and/or remediation, may not be apparent in the early years of school. Many twice-exceptional students are able to mask their diverse needs until much later in their school experience (McCoach, Kehle, Bray, & Siegle, 2001). For twice-exceptional students, it often is the case that the acceleration or enrichment needs may remain undetected until later in their school experience because they have not been put into learning environments that allow for success or that foster interest and motivation for learning. Literature suggests that it is crucial to access the talent and ability of twice-exceptional students as early as possible (Baldwin, 1995; Baum, Cooper, & Neu, 2001; Neu, 2003; Nielsen, 2002; Reis, McGuire, & Neu, 2000; Reis, Neu, & McGuire, 1995; Weinfeld, Barnes-Robinson, Jeweler, & Shevitz, 2002). A consistent theme has emerged from the literature: "Programmatic interventions suggest the importance of providing these students with a curriculum that accommodates their unique gifts and talents while simultaneously

allowing the students to compensate for problematic weaknesses" (Neu, 2003, p. 152). It is fundamental to the success of twice-exceptional students to identify and nurture their gifts and talents (Baum & Owen, 2004).

This principle addresses the need to intervene at the earliest sign of a problem. A problem is defined here as an educational need for acceleration, enrichment, and/or remediation. If caught early enough, remediation for a disability can make a significant difference for a twice-exceptional child and change the school experience to a more positive one. When provided with remediation strategies early on, twice-exceptional students can alleviate some of the challenges quickly and never need long-term intensive support.

Principle Three: Tiered Interventions

Another crucial principle of an effective RtI model is the inclusion of a comprehensive system of tiered interventions. This is a consistent component regardless of the model and essential for addressing the full range of student needs. The three-tiered service delivery model is the most common and was originally adapted from the public health and disease prevention model.

RtI begins in the universal tier with high-quality instruction and curriculum that will address the needs of approximately 80% of the students within that system. Students identified as having an educational need are provided with interventions at increasing levels of duration and intensity. Targeted interventions are used for these students and tend to address the needs of approximately 10–15% of students within the system at the targeted tier. These interventions are provided by a variety of educational

personnel including general educators, special educators, gifted educators, and specialists. When there continues to be an educational need, as measured by ongoing progress monitoring with curriculum-based measures (CBM), the intervention is modified or adapted to increase progress or to further enhance the learning of the student. The most intensive tier of intervention is meant to address the needs of about 5–7% of the students within a system.

As RtI has been implemented, many systems began the process by simply adding more targeted and intensive interventions. This can challenge a system both in terms of resources and time. These systems ultimately have had to revisit their universal tier and revise what they do for all students. This has resulted in more differentiated instruction and consistent core instruction and curriculum. Because this multitiered model is contingent on the needs of students, the universal tier will look different from system to system.

The benefits of a multitiered system for twice-exceptional students are significant. The intent of these tiers is to address the varied educational needs of students. Each twice-exceptional student has not only traits and characteristics in the realm of giftedness, but also traits and characteristics in one or more areas of disability/exceptionality. This combination of strengths and challenges has made it difficult to address the multiple and varied educational needs. The RtI/Problem-Solving Process is more fluid than the typical school system of separate programs because all student needs, remedial and advanced, can be addressed. The process allows for a discussion of the whole child, starting with strengths. This multitiered system allows for an ongoing discussion about the student's needs without a push to get the child tested

for special education. Interventions can occur without a label.

Principle Four: Use of Data

Another core principle of RtI that is directly related to the multitiered model is that student results are improved when ongoing academic and behavioral performance data are used to inform instructional decisions (CDE, 2008). The effective use of data in an RtI model is crucial in assisting instructional decisions across the tiers. This begins with screening at the universal tier for all students. This practice has great promise for twice-exceptional students. These students “. . . often use their high levels of intelligence to compensate for problematic weaknesses . . .” (Baum & Owen, 2004, p. 160). This compensation acts as a mask over their areas of struggle. With the use of valid, reliable screening instruments, many issues can be detected early and appropriate interventions assigned. Because they are so bright, twice-exceptional students can benefit immensely with early intervention. With the appropriate intervention provided through an RtI/Problem-Solving Process, the need for a label and special education may never be necessary.

Principle Five: Collaboration

Another foundational principle of an effective RtI model involves the belief that collaboration among educators, families, and community members is the foundation to effective problem solving and instructional decision making (CDE, 2008). The problem-solving process acts as a way of systematizing the decision-making process to lead to the development of instructional and intervention strategies that will have the highest probability of success. The purpose of having this process in place is to use the data

to guide decisions about appropriate interventions and to monitor student progress through those interventions to determine the effectiveness.

To have such a system in place to address the ongoing and changing needs of twice-exceptional students is extremely helpful. Too often in typical educational systems, interventions are developed but not monitored or modified for effectiveness on a frequent basis. Because of this, weeks and sometimes months of instruc-

With the appropriate intervention provided through an RtI/Problem-Solving Process, the need for a label and special education may never be necessary.

tional opportunities are lost. With the problem-solving process, there are built-in checkpoints to review data and the effectiveness of the interventions, whether they are remedial or advanced learning opportunities.

Collaboration in this process is crucial. This requires a team of professionals and parents to work together as partners to identify a measurable outcome for the student. It is an opportunity to utilize data from a variety of sources to inform the instructional decisions made for a student and to adapt the intervention along the way at appropriate intervals. This type of collaboration has been identified as crucial when addressing the needs of twice-exceptional students. Various studies have pointed toward the impor-

tance of the balance between remediation and attention to the child's strength (Baldwin, 1995; Baum et al., 2001; Nielsen, 2002; Reis et al., 1995; Weinfeld et al., 2006). Collaboration allows for a shared ownership for student success. General, special, and gifted educators work together to support the needs of students, especially twice-exceptional students.

The effectiveness of the problem-solving process is increased when collaborative consultation is added. The role of the collaborative consultant in this process becomes one of “monitor and evaluator” (Kampwirth, 2006). This role can be filled by anyone on the team but requires training and a specific skill set. It is recommended that all members of the problem-solving team be trained as collaborative consultants to better divide the responsibilities. The case study shared in this article is reflective of the problem-solving process with the collaborative consultant and should further illustrate the usefulness of such a model for twice-exceptional students.

Principle Six: Family Engagement

A final core principle that is a guiding force in an effective RtI model is the belief that ongoing and meaningful family engagement increases the successful outcomes for students. There is much research that supports the principle that families engaged in a positive relationship with schools can have a direct impact on the achievement of students (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). What is true about twice-exceptional students is that they are even more at risk for failure and underachievement without family involvement. Many times the child whom families see at home is a very different child within a school environment, where he or she may be feeling less support and success. For this reason, it is the job

of parents to advocate for their child and represent their view of his or her strengths and challenges.

The problem-solving format is a perfect venue for such advocacy. In addition, the parent must be prepared to provide support at home for academics. Within the RtI/Problem-Solving Process, the parents are at the table and involved in determining the necessary intervention for their child. They will leave the problem-solving meeting with some guidance for home support that is directly related to the chosen intervention. By empowering the family to be part of the solution, the outcomes for the child are more successful.

Case Study

This case study was written utilizing the steps of the RtI/problem-solving/consultation model. There are several steps to this problem-solving process that are important for the fidelity and implementation of a successful plan (see Figure 2):

1. initial consultation,
2. initial problem-solving team meeting,
3. intervention and progress monitoring,
4. follow-up consultation, and
5. follow-up problem-solving team meeting (CDE, 2009, p. 6).

To help illustrate how this plan might work for any child, but particularly a twice-exceptional student, we will use Brad as a case study.

Background Information

Brad is a likeable, high-energy boy who enjoys conversations with adults. He loves to watch the History Channel on television. His precocious and highly developed vocabulary, as well as his maturity, caused his preschool teacher

and staff to recommend that he skip kindergarten and begin first grade in the fall. His parents were amazed and pleased by this recommendation and they enrolled him in a private religious school. From the very beginning of first grade, he struggled with academic skills, particularly reading and writing, and was unable to keep up with his classmates. At the end of first grade it was decided that he was still not ready to move on to second grade and that it would be better for his self-esteem and academic progress if he remained in first grade another year. By the end of September of his second year as a first grader, Brad was so frustrated that he tossed over his chair and desk and ran out of school, determined never to come back. The private school agreed with this sentiment and asked the parents to find a new school. By October, Brad was transferred into the local public school. This suburban school had been implementing an RtI/Problem-Solving Process approach to meeting the needs of all students for more than 2 years. Brad's new teacher recognized very quickly that he was struggling with reading and writing. He appeared to be very unhappy, as demonstrated by negative comments such as "I'm so stupid" or "This work is dumb." He was known to rip up and throw away some of his writing assignments. Other times he would just put his head down on the desk and refuse to complete the assigned task. Because of these behaviors, the classroom teacher set up a meeting with Brad's parents as part of the data-gathering process of RtI to discuss her concerns and to determine their thoughts and ideas about their son's behaviors and progress.

Parent Information. The parents reported seeing some very angry behaviors when he would return home after school. These behaviors included his running around in circles screaming until he would wear him-

self out and collapse on the floor in tears. In addition, he also was refusing to do any homework even with support from either parent. They agreed with the teacher that a referral requesting an initial consultation would be helpful. Because of the nature of his learning and behavioral issues, the teacher requested an initial consultation and began the referral to the problem-solving team. Due to the concerns about learning and behavior, the special education teacher was assigned to be the consultant.

Initial Consultation

The purpose of the initial consultation is to discuss gathered information in order to support the referring teacher and/or parent and to begin the process of identifying the student's strengths, challenges, and needs. The classroom teacher, parent, or school professionals can make a referral requesting assistance. A consultant is assigned to meet with the teacher to discuss the child's specific behaviors and to review the academic data that is available. If it is decided that more information is needed to further determine the student's needs, then the consultant, teacher, and parent will gather more data. They may need to spend more time observing the student in a variety of settings, evaluating his abilities utilizing a variety of testing and/or screening materials or gathering more of his classroom work samples. The consultant and the teacher will list all of the strengths and needs and then prioritize them. Once the priority needs are identified, they will begin to define the problem and to generate a plan. The plan must be observable and measurable.

Initial Consultation for Brad. The classroom teacher and the consultant met to discuss Brad. The classroom teacher noted that Brad was very animated and participatory during social



studies and science. He made many contributions during these classes, often demonstrating knowledge that was very advanced and sophisticated. In fact, he would try to engage her in more in-depth discussions but she rarely could accommodate him because the rest of the class was not at that level. He also liked the conversations and book discussions during literature class/book circle but he refused to read out loud during any of these classes. In fact, it was very hard to determine his reading issues and level because he refused to take the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the reading comprehension screening. In addition, his pencil grip was awkward and his handwriting was large, disjointed, and very difficult to read. He refused to participate in any creative writing activities.

During their meeting, the classroom teacher and the consultant determined that more data were needed. The consultant decided that she would observe him in all of his classes, including social studies and science. She also would attempt to evaluate his reading ability and level individually in a separate location where he would not have to read in front of other students. They also would begin compiling his classwork, including his worksheets in social studies and science, to establish a portfolio of his writing. The classroom teacher would ask Brad's mother for any data and work samples that she had from his preschool and first-grade classes. They agreed to collect the data and to meet again in 2 weeks.

At the next meeting, they reviewed the data that they had gathered. The observations were very valuable. The consultant was able to observe his motivation in social studies and his attempts to dominate the discussion. He seemed to enjoy the science class also but was busy talking to several

other students, and it appeared that he was trying to teach them about the scientific concept that the teacher was discussing. The students, on the other hand, were not interested in his comments and appeared to be aggravated by his interruptions.

Brad's mother provided valuable information about the lack of reading help that occurred at the private school. The expectation was that he would participate in reading group with the other students and that his reading difficulties were a demonstration of willful and inappropriate behavior on his part rather than a reading problem. A review of his report cards indicated comments about his ability to follow and contribute to reading discussions but a refusal to read aloud and that he needed to put more effort into the task. Other than his parents reading to him every night before going to bed, his mother noted that he had not been given any special help with his reading.

The consultant completed the reading assessment and was able to identify that he had major issues with decoding: He knew some of the initial consonant sounds but could not identify the vowel sounds. His reading comprehension was very poor because of his attempts to sound out each word, but his oral comprehension when the story was read to him was three grade levels above his current placement.

The teacher and the consultant listed all of the existing needs and the accompanying data. When they prioritized the problems and abilities, they determined that they needed to focus on his decoding skills and needed to address his interest and passion in social studies or science by involving him in an advanced study activity. The consultant agreed to set up the initial problem-solving team meeting and the teacher stated that she would call the parents to invite them to participate in the meeting.

Initial Problem-Solving Team Meeting

The purpose of the initial problem-solving team meeting is to generate interventions that are measurable and observable and that address the identified problem or ability. Because the problem identification has occurred at the initial consultation, this meeting can focus on determining the specific interventions; establishing the intensity and duration of the interventions; assigning the person(s) responsible for the interventions; identifying the materials, accommodations, and modifications; and determining the progress monitoring schedule. The parent is considered to be a valued member of this team and often is given tasks to accomplish at home that reinforce and support the efforts of the school personnel. At the secondary level, the student often is asked to participate in the meeting. Minutes of the meeting are taken by the assigned note taker and distributed to all participants. If the initial consultation has been effective, the initial problem-solving team meeting should not take more than an hour.

Brad's Initial Problem-Solving Team Meeting. There were a number of participants—the classroom teacher, the consultant, the gifted and talented coordinator, the occupational therapist, the reading teacher, the principal, and Brad's parents. Because Brad demonstrated many of the behavioral characteristics of a twice-exceptional student, it was determined that an intervention focusing on his strength, as well as an intervention to address at least one of his academic challenges, was necessary. After discussing the reasons for Brad's referral and reviewing the data, the problem-solving team determined that the following plans would be put in place.

In order to capitalize on Brad's interest in social studies, it was determined

that he would develop an independent study. He would be given options to explore a topic of interest related to the social studies curriculum in more depth. Prior to the independent study, he would be given an oral preassessment to ascertain his knowledge of the basic curriculum in this area. He also would be given the opportunity to choose the method of presenting his independent project. He would join a small group of first, second, and third graders who were working on independent projects with the gifted and talented teacher twice a week for 45 minutes each. He also would be given time to work on his project during social studies class when the other students were working on their assignments. The classroom teacher, with the assistance of the gifted and talented teacher, would design a rubric for grading and monitoring his project. Brad would accompany his class on field trips to the police station, fire station, and the mayor's office during the 4-week social studies unit on community. His parents agreed to participate by taking Brad to visit the community library in addition to historical buildings and sites in the area.

The problem-solving committee determined from the data and from comments that they had heard Brad say that he is very frustrated with his inability to read quickly and well. Although the classroom teacher was already teaching phonics as part of the reading/literacy block every day, it was decided that Brad would benefit more from a research-based targeted intervention designed to teach decoding skills in a sequential and multisensory manner. The reading teacher was already working with two other students on this intervention during that block and she felt that he would fit nicely with the other students. He would participate in this group 5 days a week for 30 minutes per day. He

already had been given the pretest so that the reading teacher knew exactly what skills he needed to learn. The reading teacher also worked with the classroom teacher to alert her to what phonetic skills were being addressed weekly so that she could reinforce them during classroom activities.

In addition to the two plans that focused on his strengths and concerns, the committee decided that they needed more information about his difficulties with writing. The parents granted permission to allow the occupational therapist to do an assessment.

It was agreed that the problem-solving committee would meet in 3 weeks to determine if progress was being made.

Intervention and Progress Monitoring

Once the problem-solving meeting takes place, it is time to begin the intervention and progress monitoring phase. It is important during this phase that the plan that is developed during the meeting is implemented with fidelity. The consultant will continue to be involved as a support to the classroom teacher.

Brad's Intervention and Progress Monitoring. The classroom teacher and the reading teacher met that afternoon to discuss the reading curriculum and decided that he would start with the new phonics group on Monday. The teacher was given the lesson plans for the week so that she could support both Brad and the other two students in class. The two teachers agreed to meet every Friday to review the curriculum and progress monitoring data.

The day after the problem-solving meeting, the classroom teacher gave Brad his social studies oral pretest. It was determined that he indeed knew the information needed to pass the assessment at the end of the Pilgrim

unit. The day after the classroom teacher alerted his parents, she and the gifted and talented teacher met with Brad to discuss the plan. Brad was delighted that he was going to be able to work on a special project. Because the current topic of the social studies curriculum was community services, Brad chose to compare and contrast the community services provided during the colonial period versus those in his current New England town. After he was given options of how he would present his independent study, he chose to create a slideshow presentation and he already had some ideas that he wanted to incorporate into the presentation. He would have time over the weekend to go to the library with his parents and would start work on his project on Tuesday during his session with the gifted and talented teacher.

Follow-Up Consultation

The follow-up consultation is important in order to determine whether all of the plans are being implemented and to determine if adjustments need to be made. The assigned consultant can meet with the parents, classroom teacher, and/or the teachers who are providing intervention services. The consultant also will look at the data being collected because they will be the input necessary for making any adjustments during the next problem-solving meeting.

Brad's Follow-Up Consultation. The special education teacher had been assigned as the consultant for Brad's case. Two weeks into the intervention, she arranged a meeting with the classroom teacher, the reading teacher, and the gifted and talented teacher to determine Brad's progress with the new plans. The classroom teacher reported that Brad was responding well to the social studies plan. He looked forward to going to the gifted and tal-

ented resource room twice a week and he proudly showed her the progress he was making on his slideshow presentation. The gifted and talented teacher concurred that he was taking responsibility for his project and was following the outline that they had developed. Instead of participating in the social studies activities in the classroom (except for the field trips), he was working independently at the library or on the classroom computer. Both teachers felt that he would have his project completed by the 3-week deadline. They also noted that his parents had been very helpful with getting him resource books and books on CD at the local library.

The reading teacher stated that Brad was actively participating in the reading program and that it appeared from his progress that he was responding positively to the sequential and multisensory approach to phonics. He had learned several consonant sounds but was still having difficulty with the short vowel sounds. The classroom teacher noted that even though he was making progress, he was very unhappy in her reading group. Because his comprehension was far better than he was able to read, as noted in the testing prior to the initial problem-solving meeting, she wanted to explore ways to allow him to be in a more sophisticated reading group because of his need to discuss and analyze the reading passages.

The classroom teacher also stated that she was still very concerned about his difficulty with writing and his refusal to do any workbook pages or written assignments. He was no longer ripping up his papers or becoming as angry but was still putting his head down and refusing to work. The occupational therapist was scheduled to assess Brad the following week, and all of his teachers were looking forward to learning the results in order to assist Brad better with his written

skills. The consultant assisted the classroom teacher in compiling a portfolio of the limited number of writing samples that Brad had completed to date during the year.

The consultant asked about Brad's parents and whether they had noted any changes. The classroom teacher noted that she had been talking to Brad's mother every Friday informally via e-mail. She reported that his behavior was still very unpredictable at home: Sometimes he would become upset and irritable, which led to crying and tantrums, and other

problem-solving team except for the occupational therapist, who had been out for a week with the flu. They determined that they would wait until the next meeting to review her results and decide what intervention was necessary.

They began by discussing Brad's social studies independent project in which he was going to develop a slideshow presentation. It was determined that this had been a very successful plan based on the results of his final project in which he produced 10 relevant slides. He worked very effectively

He worked very effectively with the gifted and talented teacher, was able to follow the outline and work independently in the classroom during social studies, and was able to demonstrate an increased understanding and knowledge about the subject.

times he was sweet, agreeable, and willing to work on his special social studies project. He was still refusing to do any other type of homework.

Follow-Up Problem-Solving Team Meeting

At this meeting, there should be enough data to determine whether progress is being made, to review the student's response to intervention, and to discuss the next steps. The teacher, consultant, and parents have an opportunity to review the data together and to make decisions about continuing the current plan or to change plans based on information collected.

Brad's Follow-Up Problem-Solving Team Meeting. The follow-up problem-solving team consisted of the same members that met during the initial

with the gifted and talented teacher, was able to follow the outline and work independently in the classroom during social studies, and was able to demonstrate an increased understanding and knowledge about the subject. He earned an A on his project as per the rubric developed by the classroom teacher and the gifted and talented teacher at the beginning of the unit. Because the data demonstrated success, it was decided that another project with the gifted and talented teacher was appropriate.

The reading teacher reviewed the data from Brad's daily work in the phonics group. In 3 weeks, he had learned four initial consonant sounds and was practicing four more. Although he was able to identify the initial consonant sounds, he was still having difficulty with consonant-vowel-consonant (c-v-

c) words because of the short vowel sounds. It was decided that the reading teacher and the classroom teacher would continue to work on the specific skills related to c-v-c and short vowel sounds. They also discussed that he may need the reading program with a different approach in the future in order to acquire the vowel sounds if the data demonstrate that need. However, they felt that it was too soon to make that decision because they still did not have enough data. They decided to monitor his progress closely.

The classroom and reading teachers also noted that even though Brad was struggling with decoding, his reading assessment information indicated that he was able to comprehend at least two grade levels above his actual grade placement. Brad was complaining during reading group that the stories were boring and was either dominating the group, making fun of the stories, or refusing to participate. Because this issue had been discussed during consultation, the special education teacher had done some checking prior to the meeting. She had talked to the high school principal about utilizing one of the honors students who needed to earn community service credit. The student agreed to record his reading of the textbook stories and the questions into a tape recorder. This way, Brad could listen to the stories when everyone else was reading silently and he would be prepared to participate in the highest level reading group with four other students on a daily basis for 30 minutes. The classroom teacher would document each day whether or not he was prepared by answering the lower level questions correctly and whether or not he contributed to the higher level cognitive questioning, such as analysis and evaluation, that were typical in that reading group. Because the end of the first semester was in 3 weeks, the problem-solving

team decided that it would be helpful to meet at that time.

Future Steps

The RtI process will continue during the year as the problem-solving team and Brad's assigned consultant assess the data, review his progress, and determine whether intervention is still needed or should be modified. The important element for a twice-exceptional student is that both his strengths and his challenges are addressed. During that process, Brad may receive interventions that are at any one of the tiers but the decisions will be based on his needs and the data gathered through the interventions. Ultimately, if these interventions are not sufficient to meet Brad's needs as currently established, and he demonstrates the need for ongoing intensive support to be successful, then he may be identified as a student with a disability and an Individualized Educational Program will be developed through this same process. He also may be identified as a student who needs gifted and talented ongoing services.

Conclusion

Brad's case study illustrates why RtI is a promising fit for the child who has gifts and learning and emotional issues. Instead of thinking about putting a label on Brad and sending him to special education, the classroom teacher focused on his needs first. She was aware that she needed to identify the problem and, with the help of the consultant and the problem-solving team, found a way to assist him with the evidence-based curriculum and activities that were available to her and the team. The core principles of RtI are the driving force behind this process and evident throughout. With

a twice-exceptional child like Brad, the goal is always to focus on both the gift and the academic or behavioral need. The research identified in this paper have stated that it is important that educators and parents find ways to emphasize the student's strengths. These students, like all students, need to have high-level instruction and academic challenges. At the same time, twice-exceptional students must receive appropriate remediation and help for the areas that interfere with their progress. As a result of the problem-solving/consultation process, Brad was able to receive early intervention in reading and could still participate in higher level thinking activities, such as the social studies independent project. The problem-solving team was still in the process of evaluating the data to determine whether he needed modifications or intensive support in writing. Because the RtI process is ongoing and focuses on student needs, the problem-solving team will continue to review Brad's progress and the interventionist, along with the consultant, will adjust the intensity and type of services and materials along the way. They might determine that he needs more support within the most intensive tier of interventions for his reading and writing, but that he is able to function with his classmates in an activity at the universal tier in science and math. These decisions will be based on his needs, not his label. Because interventions are based on the needs of students within individual systems, determination of the level of the intervention will be dependent on the system. At some point in the process, there may be a time when a disability is suspected and it may be evident that Brad will need ongoing targeted and/or intensive support to be successful. At this point, a recommendation for consideration for a full and individual evaluation would be made.

Because Response to Intervention is a multifaceted approach, it addresses the comprehensive academic and behavioral needs of all students. Inherent in its design is the focus on both student strengths and challenges in a variety of ways. Because of the complex needs of twice-exceptional students, the RtI/ Problem-Solving Process is a very promising system that will meet their needs for high-level instruction and appropriate remediation. The old system of “wait to fail” identification and service delivery is not an adequate model for any student, but is particularly ineffective with the twice-exceptional student because of his or her unique needs. As demonstrated by the research, there is an urgency to intervene early with twice-exceptional students and to focus on their strengths. The core principles of a Response to Intervention model allow the needs of twice-exceptional students to be directly addressed. These principles direct the focus of an entire system to success for all students. As the principles indicate, this includes an intentional emphasis on early intervention through a multitiered approach based on student needs. This requires a move away from the silos of education into a more collaborative effort and a need to create an “every-ed” approach. With an increased emphasis on student outcomes and data-driven instructional decisions in an RtI model, this will lead to a much more successful school experience for twice-exceptional students. **GCT**

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Policy Implications at the State and District Level With RtI for Gifted Students

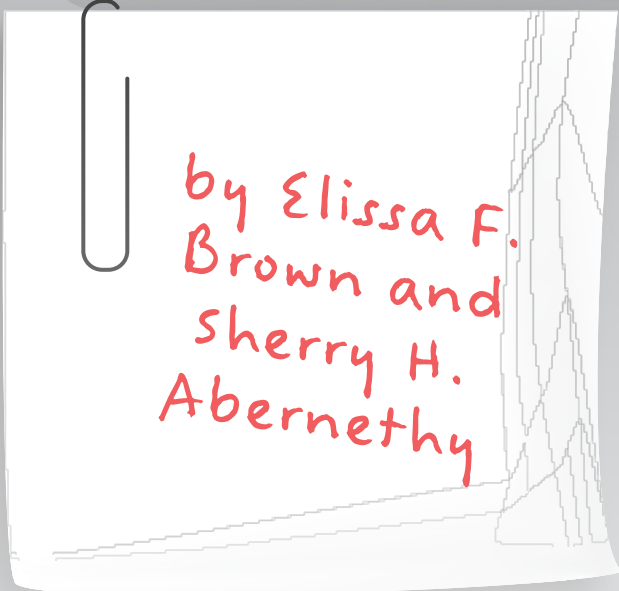
Introduction

Response to Intervention (RtI) has become an instructional practice employed predominantly in general education classrooms across the United States as a direct result of the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004. RtI has implications for gifted education as a framework for policy development because it is an integrative approach to classroom practices that modify high-quality instruction based upon students' academic or behavioral needs (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2007). It is based on a public health model of intervention in which tiers of increasingly intense interventions are directed at correspondingly smaller and

smaller population segments (Mellard & Johnson, 2008). Students are systematically and frequently monitored, data are evaluated, goals and evidence-based interventions are implemented in order to preclude a student from being identified, and ultimately the students are placed in special education services. The focus on the three aspects of (a) screening and prevention, (b) early intervention, and (c) disability determination underscores RtI as an important process because of its potential to help schools provide appropriate learning experiences for all students.

At a practical level, RtI is just sound, effective teaching. It is preassessing students through a strategic process, making modifications in accordance to a student's displayed needs, and monitoring student progress employing a tiered approach in order for higher student

outcomes to be realized. So, one might ask, "Don't teachers of the gifted do this already?" There are many program and curricular models in gifted education; some address a tiered approach to instruction and interventions, while other models address curricular or grouping strategies (VanTassel-Baska & Brown, 2009). Regardless of the program or curricular model employed in gifted education classrooms, it is typically not implemented consistently across the country or even within the same school district. As a field, gifted education does not endorse any one approach to serving students because of the range of student abilities and resulting concomitant diverse needs. Therefore, service delivery in gifted education is still heavily teacher dependent. Yet, many of the components of RtI are employed in gifted education, albeit



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inconsistently, such as preassessment. The use of preassessment in gifted education to diagnostically evaluate a gifted learner's performance prior to instruction has been widely used in classrooms to determine an authentic level of achievement and then implement pedagogical modifications for the student. Preassessment has been documented as an effective tool with gifted learners (Callahan, 2005), especially if we accept the premise that gifted students already have mastered approximately 30% of the curriculum to be taught (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Although some of the current gifted curricular and instructional models embed key components of RtI within them, they are not implemented in a coherent or strategic fashion and educational policies undergirding both RtI and effective

practices in gifted education are scant. Unless RtI has leadership support and district and/or state policies, it will not be implemented with fidelity and will lose its potential as a framework for overall student achievement. Leadership and policies become the infrastructure for RtI to not only become operational but systemic. Therefore, a need exists to create state and local policies that allow for the congruence of RtI and gifted education.

Rationale for Policy Initiatives

The stance that policies delineating the use of RtI for gifted students are needed is based on three major assumptions about the role of policies for the gifted.

The first assumption is that policies for gifted learners have been relegated to state and local initiatives, typically linked to funding priorities. Without a district or state policy, implementation of RtI remains idiosyncratic, lacks fidelity, and rests on the backs of a passionate few who value its inherent potential for student achievement. Employing RtI as a vehicle for gifted education service and delivery would require a policy that speaks to the flexibility of curricular, instructional, and assessment practices.

The second assumption is that gifted education needs coherency among program components, such as identification and services linked to professional development and teacher preparation. Frequently, due to a lack of adequate resources, gifted educa-

tion has been a fragmented enterprise at the local level, perhaps a pull-out program in language arts at the elementary school, an ability-grouped mathematics class at the middle school, or a few designated Advanced Placement (AP) courses at the high school. Each operates independently from the other and is not necessarily linked to the identification processes employed to find gifted students and develop their potential. In order to achieve a coherent framework for gifted programming that includes RtI as an approach, the field must employ a systematic framework for improvement and must develop policies that support implementation and program improvement in a coherent fashion.

The third assumption is that the development of policy that speaks to RtI's implication for gifted students links gifted education to the broader reform efforts occurring within special and general education. Gifted education can ill afford to be an "island unto oneself." Clune (1993) noted that agenda policy development is an essential component of sustaining educational reform. Gifted education historically has used the special education model as a basis for programming and identification and has used the psychological measurement orientation as a means of encompassing student outliers. At the same time, gifted education has attempted to incorporate general educational principles of curriculum design, teacher expertise, and organizational support structures. If gifted education is to continue and advance as a field, it will have to embrace the world of general education, its models, and its curriculum reform while not abandoning the exceptionality concept that defines the nature of the population (VanTassel-Baska, 2003). Therefore, a policy that can create a hybrid combining the best practices of special, general, and gifted education

can ensure sound practices built on a research base.

Potential RtI Components for Gifted Policy Development

At this point, policy development and implementation of coherency among policy components in gifted education has been limited. However, by linking gifted policies to RtI and other special or general education practices, the field can reach consensus on policy components that could serve as a template for program and student improvement. Table 1 explores the components for policy interface that speak to the core components and stages in RtI, implications for gifted education, and areas for policy development.

Universal screening as the first key component of RtI is a corollary for screening and nurturing potential in gifted education prior to any formal identification. Screening in gifted education usually precedes a more formalized identification process and allows schools and teachers a more informal opportunity to assess students' skills and abilities. One of the considerations with screening for giftedness is to use measures that allow for multiple levels of growth to be displayed. Ceiling effect with this population is an issue and should be taken into consideration. When choosing measures to assess the core, teachers should choose materials that allow for above-grade-level growth to be observed or displayed. RtI screening is based on the core curriculum as the source of data and the core curriculum in most schools and states is pitched at grade-level competencies; therefore, above-grade-level core curriculum for universal screening with gifted students should be employed. Gifted education could readily adopt

some of the screening practices employed in RtI as screening practices for nurturing potential by considering students' authentic responses to curriculum prior to formal identification. Most states do not have a formal policy for screening in gifted education, but it is implied within their identification policy.

Early identification policies that call for nurturing potential in historically underserved populations, such as the culturally and linguistically diverse, economically disadvantaged, and twice-exceptional, would shore up that all students are screened for potential. Attention to identification issues receives the greatest emphasis in all state regulations in gifted education. States are employing more equitable approaches and procedures for identification, seeking to incorporate language that honors a diverse student population (Brown, Avery, VanTassel-Baska, Worley, & Stambaugh, 2006). Universal screening that focuses on early intervention could be incorporated into an identification policy that calls for casting a wide net and the use of early intervention strategies in considering talent propensities of early learners and seeking potential in traditionally underrepresented populations.

Another component of RtI that interfaces with gifted education once a student is identified for gifted services is the degree to which services are linked to learners' skills, interests, and learning profiles. A policy on service delivery being directly linked to the learner and resulting educational needs strengthens gifted education because it begins to provide coherency among programming aspects, such as identification and service. In gifted education, state policies on appropriate programs and services are less prominent, and frequently, if they exist, are not connected to identification. In the RtI model of reme-

Table 1
Components of Response to Intervention and the Implications
for Gifted Education and Policy Development

Components of RtI	Implications for Gifted	Areas for Policy Development
Screening/Prevention (Universal Screening: Assessing the Core)	Baseline screening for all students to determine talent pool and potentiality; preassessment to determine prerequisite knowledge and skills	Early identification policies that call for nurturing potential Early identification policies for ensuring that historically underserved populations, including culturally and linguistically diverse, economically disadvantaged, and twice-exceptional students, are proactively sought
Early Intervention	Discerning individual precocity and making modifications accordingly with individuals or small groups of students	
Disability/Ability Determination	Identifying based on ability determination	Policy on off-grade-level testing for highly gifted
Tiered Service Delivery	Providing services that match learner abilities, interests, and skills	Policy that matches service delivery to identification or area(s) of ability
Fidelity of Implementation	Ensuring coherency among program components such as identification and service, personnel preparation, and program evaluation, as well as ensuring that what gets implemented is research-based	Evaluation/accountability policy for monitoring program delivery and fidelity of services
Professional Development	Providing professional development for different stakeholders, as well as encouraging or requiring teachers of the gifted to have a gifted license or add-on endorsement	Policy for teacher development, licensure, and professional development of all personnel involved with gifted students
Parent Involvement	Communicating and involving parents in gifted programs or as part of a local steering committee; parents may be part of a local committee to develop or revise local plans for the gifted	Policy on involving parents either as part of a local steering committee, to develop and revise local plans, or other mechanism ensuring parent involvement and communication

dial needs currently in place in many states, service delivery is tiered based on the intensity of need. If a student requires intensive reading remediation based on earlier screening measures, it is provided. Often in the field of gifted education, a school system may have a service delivery model, such as a pull-out resource room focusing on enrichment activities, that may or may not have anything to do with the learner but rather scheduling or teacher preferences. Services for gifted learners must be linked to the student's level of achievement to ensure student growth.

Another area in which RtI has implications for gifted education is the area of fidelity of implementing services and overall fidelity of program components. Progress monitoring as

a key component in RtI is a scientifically based practice of assessing students' performance on a regular basis. Progress monitoring helps school teams make ongoing decisions about instruction. In an era of accountability, implementing an array of services with fidelity cannot be understated. Providing evidence-based instruction resulting in student learning has been found to be almost nonexistent in gifted evaluation studies. VanTassel-Baska and Feng (2004) found that there was an absence of data on student learning, particularly from a systemic perspective, across seven gifted program evaluations conducted state-wide and in local school districts.

Teacher preparation is another key component necessary to ensure program

improvement and a standard of quality instruction in gifted education. Access to trained teachers is especially critical because research has documented (Westberg, Archambault, Dobyns, & Slavin, 1993) that general classroom teachers make very few, if any, modifications for academically talented learners. Teachers who do receive specialized training are more likely to provide differentiated curricular and instructional approaches that meet the needs of gifted learners. The teacher preparation policies that do exist often lack specificity in respect to content standards or involvement with a state's higher educational community. Moreover, policies typically do not link staff development with teacher performance nor do they delineate the issue of differentiation

of content standards. In 2006, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) adopted standards collaboratively developed by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). These are national standards for university programs that prepare teachers of the gifted and represent a consensus on what teachers should know and be able to do.

Lastly, parental involvement is a key component that interfaces with RtI. In the Response to Intervention model, one of the benefits for parents is that they see how their child is doing compared to peers and how the child's class measures up to other classes of the same grade. They can get these results on a regular basis from their school. If class scores are down, for instance, questions will be raised about the quality of teaching in that class; thus, classroom teachers are more accountable for their instruction. Gifted education could adopt this approach to help ensure that fidelity of implementation with parent support occurs.

Implementation of RtI in North Carolina

North Carolina, like many other states, has recognized this integrative approach to structured levels of support and solid instruction. Although RtI originated from the reauthorization of IDEA 2004 as a process for identifying Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), North Carolina has chosen to focus implementation of this initiative as a vehicle to increase academic and behavioral achievement for all learners by working with regular education and classroom teachers. At present, it is not being employed in gifted education in North Carolina, but it is being implemented in general education classrooms in 92 school systems.

Implementation of RtI using a four-tier model of problem solving in North Carolina began in 2004, with pilots in five school systems. The pilots were chosen through an application process. These school systems represented a geographic cross-section of North Carolina, including varied size, location, and student performance levels. The focus on RtI for these pilot sites began with intensive training in problem solving, curriculum-based assessment, awareness of scientific research-based interventions in curriculum areas, positive behavior support, planning, and facilitation. After the initial training and beginning stages of implementation by the pilots, training was then expanded to other school systems in the state through an additional application process. To date, 195 schools in 92 school systems have participated in state-level training. Currently, 24 school systems across North Carolina with a total count of 62 elementary schools are fully implementing RtI for SLD eligibility. Several secondary schools are moving toward full implementation within the next school year. Preliminary data currently are being collected from the 62 schools fully implementing RtI. Data are being collected on the following RtI components: highest tier of intervention, performance on end-of-year state assessments in reading and math, student retention, and eligibility for exceptional children services.

Although it originally was introduced as an alternative to eligibility determination of specific learning disabilities, schools are finding that this model enables them to look at the performance of all students. Although the training and implementation in North Carolina to date has been to preclude students from being identified with SLD and to avoid the Exceptional Children categorization, discussions have ensued around the applicability

to all learners, even those performing above grade level or who have the potential to perform above grade level. But to date, no explicit application of RtI to gifted education has occurred in North Carolina. When schools assess their core instruction, they identify not only students who are lacking in foundational skills, but also students who are in need of enrichment and expanded instruction beyond their current grade-level curriculum. The potential for embedding the RtI model exists for supporting all students, even those who are potentially gifted, through a structured model of multilevel support.

Action Steps for Policy Development

In order to begin considering how RtI and gifted education can inform each other to ensure that gifted students' needs are met within the RtI framework, a review of current policies, in addition to developing new policies, may be in order. The following action steps for policy development provide guiding questions to frame local or state actions when determining the best course of policy options being considered.

- *Convene a Task Force.* Identify a representative sample of stakeholders (local or state) to examine current policies and identify potential areas (e.g., curriculum) for policy development. Stakeholder representation should include gifted educators, special educators, and general educators.
- *Review Current Policies.* What policies currently exist at state or local levels? Are the current policies comprehensive or inclusive of gifted students, even those from traditionally underrepresented populations? Do the policies link or align to the broader local or state context? Do

gifted education policies connect to general education or special education policies in appropriate and meaningful ways?

- *Assess the Implications of Creating a New or Revised Policy.* How are different stakeholders related to the new policy? Would there be any unintended consequences as a result of the revised or new policy? What assumptions does the new or revised policy communicate?
- *Create or Revise Policies.* Create a policy that speaks to screening for potential and includes all growth (below grade level, at grade level, and above grade level), as well as providing tiered services that respond to individual needs. Is the policy inclusive of all learners? Does the policy consider grouping, curricular, and instructional modifications? Does the policy allow for horizontal and vertical articulation? Does it convey the school's or district's vision for student success? Is the new/revised policy either adding value to existing policies or filling a policy vacuum?
- *Implementation Considerations.* What are the implications for budget? What mechanisms are in place for communication, disseminating information, and providing technical assistance to ensure the operationalization of the new/revised policy?
- *Study the Fidelity of Policy Implementation.* Determine policy efficacy through gathering student and program data.

RtI serves as a valuable framework for conversations about policy development because of its potential utility in providing appropriate learning experiences for all students as well as early identification of students who lack an appropriate match of instructional and curricular choices. Developing a set of action steps for policy development is a

way to undergird school practices with the necessary infrastructure.

Conclusion

In the absence of federal laws or mandates governing gifted education, state and local policy are the cornerstone driving gifted education programming in school systems across the United States. The need for coherent policies in gifted education that address the components of RtI is an opportunity to bring a comprehensive perspective—one from special education, gifted education, and general education—to the table to create policies that address differentiation, tiered services, and teacher education from a common framework. As the use of state standards and accountability measures intensify, the gifted field will find it necessary to use policies as the base for creating an infrastructure to support student growth. The way we approach the practice of education is experiencing tidal waves. There are competing demands for limited resources. We can ill afford to operate on separate agendas if we want to address the need for developing optimal opportunities for our best learners. The essential question is how to embrace the betterment of all learners, including the gifted. As a result, considering a model such as RtI affords the field an opportunity to partner with regular education and special education in developing policies undergirded by research that are more dynamic and comprehensive in nature by merging and integrating the best of each field. Gifted learners and indeed all learners' educational futures depend upon it. **GCT**

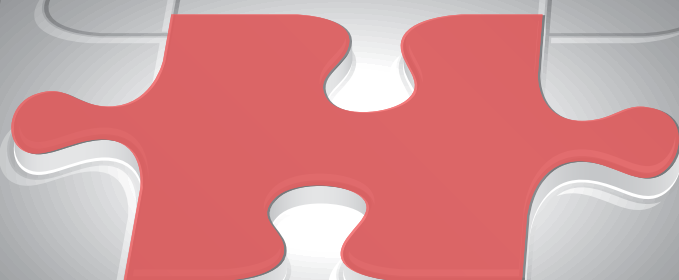
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Remaining Challenges

for the Use of RtI With Gifted Education

by Claire E. Hughes, Karen Rollins, Susan K. Johnsen, Daphne A. Pereles, Stuart Omdal, Lois Baldwin, Elissa F. Brown, Sherry H. Abernethy, and Mary Ruth Coleman



In preparation of this special issue, we asked contributing authors to think about the challenges that might be faced if gifted education moves toward an RtI approach. The following shared challenges can be used as discussion points for planning and reflection.

Overall Challenges for RtI

RtI as Systemic Change

Response to Intervention has many positive features that will help students not only succeed, but when paired

with a strand that incorporates gifted, could even help students reach their potential. However, RtI will not be successful unless it is viewed as a systemic process that involves systemic change. For change to occur at the classroom level, it also must involve administrative support at the school and district levels. If implementation is not done systemically, RtI will meet with limited success.

Program Intent and Philosophy

Employing RtI as a framework for gifted programming requires that programming be inclusive rather than

exclusive because of the emphasis on universal screening and proactively responding to students' needs based on formative and curriculum-based assessment. Many gifted programs and state policies still operate with an "exclusivity" model wherein only students whose aptitude or achievement scores fall within a range above the mean can receive services. Using an RtI model to design policy would challenge assumptions around narrow definitions and identification processes for determining who is gifted and would include the nurturing of potential as part of services. A challenge for gifted education teachers and administrators is adjusting to a major change in the identification process. For decades, the first step in the gifted education process was identifying who was and was not "gifted." The label became the key to services and programming. When students display the characteristics and/or behaviors associated with giftedness and the school system is poised to respond to those documented academic needs for enrichment and/or acceleration, the need for the gifted label is no longer the "gatekeeper" to services and programming associated with gifted and talented education.

Budget and Resource Implications

There are budget implications if gifted education employs an RtI approach for teacher preparation, curriculum and assessment materials, program implementation, and program evaluation. Given current budgetary constraints for gifted funding in federal and state budgets, this remains a challenge. New and collaborative approaches to funding will have to be developed to ensure resources for nurturing, recognizing, and responding to the strengths of all children. Collaborative approaches might include resources from: (a) Title

Using an RtI model to design policy would challenge assumptions around narrow definitions and identification processes for determining who is gifted and would include the nurturing of potential as part of services.

I enrichment funds, (b) technology funds for distance learning, (c) media center funds for challenging learning materials, (d) curriculum funds for rigorous high-end classes, and (e) special education or 504 funds for twice-exceptional learners. Just as greater collaboration is needed for service delivery, greater collaboration also is needed to pool resources and reduce the fragmentation of supports.

Leadership

When establishing RtI on a campus, all personnel and all departments must work together in a cohesive fashion in order for the process to work. Most importantly, administration must provide good leadership in order to encourage and foster change. This leadership must come from not only district administrators such as superintendents, curriculum specialists, and special program directors, but also from campus principals, vice principals, and campus leaders. RtI is a complex system that requires vision, strong leadership, and collaboration. Granted, all personnel must do their part in establishing the system and working with students, but it is the job of administrators to facilitate the change and problem solve for the campus every step of the way.

Professional Development

Staff will need training on differentiated instruction and enrichment strategies to enhance instruction for students identified as gifted. Teachers will need an understanding of how to expand curriculum to challenge these identified learners. Additionally, school leaders must have training and commitment to the approach as a way to scaffold learning for all learners. RtI training and long-term follow-up also will be an essential component of expanding the capacity to support the change.

Challenges for Schools and Classrooms Implementing RtI

Implementing Differentiated Strategies Within Tier 1

For RtI to be responsive to gifted and talented students, differentiation needs to occur at the Tier 1 level in all core subject areas. In this way, students who have strengths in one subject area and who exhibit a disability in another may receive appropriate interventions. In the case of gifted students, these interventions might include adding depth and complexity to the content, faster pacing, independent study, choices among assignments,

above-grade-level activities, curriculum compacting, tiered assignments, and so on. It is not easy for teachers to provide for a wide range of differences in the classroom. Teachers need to have flexibility in their curriculum and in the activities that they use in the classroom. A standard curriculum will not address each student's strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, teachers need to have access to a variety of curricular materials so that they can intervene with individual students.

Collaboration

Administrators, special education teachers, gifted education teachers, and other support personnel need to assist the general education teacher in implementing varied interventions and in reviewing the assessment information to determine their effectiveness. Moreover, this support needs to be ongoing and help the teacher learn how to manage a wide range of differences in the classroom. Management techniques might include the use of flexible grouping, a variety of activities, student record keeping, learning stations, flexible pacing and scheduling, and independent studies. With curricular and instructional support, there is a greater likelihood that appropriate support can occur at the Tier 1 level and all students will receive instruction that adapts to their abilities and disabilities.

Research-Based Instructional Practices

In both RtI's approaches for special education students (e.g., standard protocol and problem solving), there is an emphasis on research-based practices so that students who need more intensive services or services beyond the general education classroom actually need them and do not receive them because

they received inadequate instruction. Just as in special education, gifted education needs to clearly identify practices that have evidence to support their use. Research support enables the teacher to select the most effective programs, materials, and instructional strategies for gifted students. The challenge for those involved in research is getting these best practices into the hands of teachers who provide direct services to students. Too frequently, curriculum and instructional strategies are based upon opinion, habit, or tradition. To encourage more data-based decision-making when interventions are selected, researchers need to make their results more accessible to practitioners. Similarly, practitioners need to ask the question "Is there any research evidence to support this practice?"

In gifted education, several books have been written regarding best practices (Callahan & Plucker, 2008; Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007). These books address a variety of areas that include topics such as flexible grouping, compacting the curriculum, higher level thinking, and instructional strategies within specific curriculum domains. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) also has initiated a project for analyzing and determining which evidence should be used to support a particular practice (CEC, 2008). CEC has developed specific criteria for reviewing articles that use certain research designs. As these practices are validated, CEC plans on disseminating them to schools and teachers. Teachers also may choose to take an active role in developing an evidence base by using action research in their classroom. Action research involves problem solving similar to the RtI approach. Baseline information is collected on a student's academic or behavioral progress, an intervention is applied, more data are collected, and decisions are made about the

effectiveness of the intervention. If the intervention is working, it is continued; if not, another intervention is implemented. Action research has the potential to generate new effective interventions for all students.

Developing Decision Points for More Intensive Services

Among educators, a major issue is determining the point when students need more intensive services. When does the teacher refer a child for special education or for gifted education? What constitutes inadequate progress or progress that requires more than what the general education classroom can provide? What assessments should be used in this more comprehensive level of evaluation? Highly gifted students may need radical acceleration (e.g., even though they are elementary students, they are ready to learn calculus), intensive counseling (e.g., they are very different in terms of their interests and maturity from their same-age peers), or other out-of-school activities (e.g., mentoring, competitions, dual-enrollment options). Decision-making guidelines must be created that include these kinds of high-end options.

Changes in Assessment

Progress monitoring to determine needs in intensity of instruction and strategies will be required when implementing an RtI model. Appropriate assessment tools and strategies will need to be identified to determine accelerated knowledge and potential growth of gifted students. This will require the general education teacher to use assessments that are above grade level. Such assessments are not commonly used because state-mandated tests are tightly aligned to grade-level expectations. The inclusion of above-grade-level assessments or those that

assess what gifted students know is a challenge within the RtI model. To be truly useful, teachers will need assessment data documenting when a child had progressed well beyond the expected classroom curriculum. In addition, assessments should help formally identified students so that resources can be provided for more intensive services.

Specific Remaining Challenges for Twice-Exceptional Students in RtI

Concurrent with modifications that address their individual strengths and interests, gifted students with disabilities also should be receiving interventions that directly impact the area in which they are experiencing difficulty. This dual set of needs complicates identification and service delivery and so the following specific concerns are noted for RtI with twice-exceptional learners:

- If the school system is not utilizing RtI as a comprehensive system for all students, then academic acceleration would not be part of the potential options in the screening/intervention process. This can be a problem, not only for gifted students but especially for twice-exceptional students.
- If the system is only focused on “struggling learners,” then there will be a tendency to focus on the remedial needs of twice-exceptional students rather than putting a critical emphasis on their abilities.
- Lack of awareness of the characteristics of twice-exceptional students can greatly impact whether or not the academic, social, and emotional needs of these students are addressed.
- Because their gifts and higher level thinking often mask their disability, twice-exceptional students may appear to be very average in the classroom setting. The expectation is that schoolwide screening for strengths and interests, as well as academic challenges, would identify possible concerns. If the classroom teacher does not observe any perceived problems, as in the potential for much higher achievement, or below-grade-level expectations in an academic subject, the student may never be referred to the problem-solving team.
- Many twice-exceptional students get noticed because of their negative behaviors. This can cause a focus on the behavior rather than the underlying academic problem that may be contributing to the negative behavior. It also can interfere with any recognition of ability or gift.
- If the process is done with fidelity and includes a strength-based approach, these issues should not be a concern. But, the fidelity of implementation is inconsistent at best.

Concluding Thoughts on Challenges for RtI With Gifted Education

Change is a difficult process and systemic change is even more difficult. Roles and responsibilities will change. Questions without answers will be asked. Parents and students will need to be informed. An administrator who can listen, empathize, and foster energy will go far with the implementation of RtI. As long as there is positive energy and successful leadership in place, the systemic change can at least be less painful, and the rewards reaped, such as happier, successful students, will be worth the effort.

Questions that may need to be explored to facilitate the systemic change of RtI include:

- What RtI framework will provide the blueprint of change?
- How will the current services for gifted learners fit with this framework?
- How will roles and responsibilities change?
- How can anxieties about the systemic change be eased?
- What levels of collaboration need to be established?
- How will the needs of high-potential children from culturally and linguistically diverse and economically disadvantaged families be addressed?
- How will long-term follow-up for students be provided and by whom?
- How will parents be informed of changes?
- Who will be the “go-to” person when questions arise?

In spite of the remaining challenges, the authors conclude that RtI is certainly changing the face of education and that gifted education must examine its fit with these changes. **GCT**

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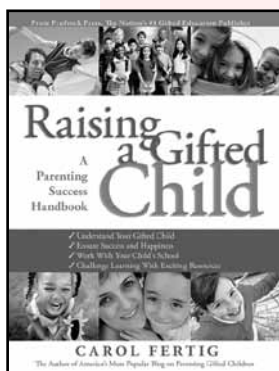
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A Comprehensive Examination of the Development of Giftedness



How do race, ethnicity, gender, and culture influence or contribute to the development of gifted and talented behaviors? Is the expression of gifted behavior predictable? How can insights gleaned from the field of gifted education inform the research, policy, and practice of psychologists? World-renowned experts in the fields of developmental psychology and gifted education come together to describe giftedness from early childhood through the elder years in the recently published book *The Development of Giftedness and Talent Across the Life Span* (ISBN-13: 978-1-43380-414-4). The interdisciplinary team of authors and researchers address myriad issues and relevant questions as they examine giftedness in each stage across the lifespan and offer crucial information and perspectives for researchers, educators, parents, and anyone interested in the development of high-level abilities, individual differences, educational policy and practice, and the realization of human potential. For more information, contact American Psychological Association, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002; 800-374-2721; <http://www.apa.org/books>.

Valuable Advice for Raising Gifted Kids



Raising a Gifted Child: A Parenting Success Handbook (ISBN-13: 978-1-59363-344-8) offers a wealth of practical, applicable knowledge that will empower parents to foster success for their child both in and out of the school setting. The concise nature of this book makes it an easy read for busy parents seeking to understand and effectively support their child. The author includes an array of strategies, resources, organizational tips, and suggestions for identifying optimal learning environments. Parents will learn how to become an active advocate for their child as they read about various educational options, specialty programs, and strategies for meeting their child's needs in each content area addressed in the classroom. By gaining a more thorough understanding of the nature and needs of gifted children, parents will be able to provide a solid foundation for positive, successful learning experiences for their gifted child that reaches far beyond the walls of the classroom. For more information, contact Prufrock Press Inc., P.O. Box 8813, Waco, TX 76714-8813; 800-998-2208, <http://www.prufrock.com>.

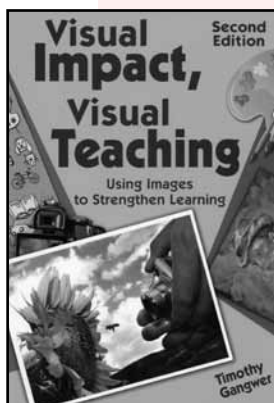
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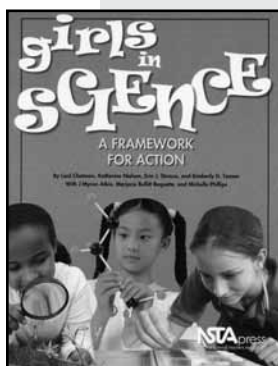
Each strip offers a process skill related to a specific level of Bloom's taxonomy with blanks for teachers to fill in the appropriate content knowledge. On the back side of each strip, the developers have compiled a list of ways for teachers to use the strip in each core content area, as well as suggestions for how to manage the activity. *Power Strips Plus* will bolster instructional objectives as they challenge students to complete a variety of products ranging from listing characters in a story to creating a commercial for a given product or skill. This tool encourages differentiation in the classroom as it caters to individual learner preferences, and may be utilized in a variety of environments such as whole-group instruction, independent activities, learning centers, individualized learning plans, and more. For more information, contact Mentoring Minds, P.O. Box 8843, Tyler, TX 75711; 800-585-5258; <http://www.mentoringminds.com>.

A Variety of Dynamic Visual Tools



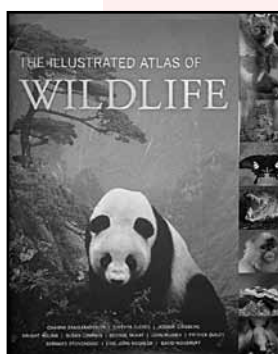
Visual Impact, Visual Teaching: Using Images to Strengthen Learning (ISBN-13: 978-1-4129-6829-4) is a valuable resource for those teaching children who have an interest or talent in the visual arts. This book offers suggestions for incorporating visual learning into each content area and for assessing products created by students who prefer to demonstrate their understanding through a visual medium. Teachers are introduced to a variety of methods for visual communication such as graphic organizers and digital photography, as well as how to encourage critical thinking skills by facilitating analysis and interpretation of works of art. With applications to math, language arts, science, social studies, and environmental studies, this is a fabulous resource for alternative approaches to teaching and assessing the work of those students with an affinity for the visual arts. For more information, contact Corwin Press, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; 800-233-9936; <http://www.corwinpress.com>.

Equitable Science Classrooms



In an effort to establish a gender-equitable learning environment in science classrooms across grade levels, students, teachers, and scientists came together to write *Girls in Science: A Framework for Action* (ISBN-13: 978-1-93353-104-5). As the number of young women showing interest and giftedness in the science field steadily grows, so too does the possibility that this population may become more and more at risk. Historically, females have been treated differently than their male counterparts in the science classroom resulting in an ever-widening gap in science achievement across the two genders. This text offers a variety of vignettes accompanied by explicit explanations and strategies that focus on student goals, teacher goals, and science goals. When incorporated into regular classroom instruction, these tools will help to bolster girls' confidence in their ability to succeed in the science field, thus diminishing the scientific achievement gap and stereotypical treatment of females in the classroom. For more information, contact NSTA Press, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201; 703-243-7100; <http://www.nsta.org>.

A Pictorial Tour of Wildlife and Wonder



The Illustrated Atlas of Wildlife (ISBN-13: 978-0-520-25785-6) is a truly awe-inspiring collection of maps, photographs, and original artwork that is sure to enhance all home, school, and classroom libraries. Boasting more than 800 high-quality photographs, this book provides a means for teachers to access students' prior knowledge or build a foundational understanding through visual representations in life science, biology, and geography. Exploring the seven land regions of the living earth, as well as the world of oceans and underwater creatures in stunning detail, this resource gives children an up-close, intimate experience with the natural world from their home or classroom. Each page provides vivid photographs accompanied by informative captions, bar and line graphs, a brief description of the region, and information regarding any endangering species or conservation issues present in the region. Breathtaking photographs and comprehensive content help to create a holistic, educational experience for all readers. For more information, contact University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94704-1012; 510-642-4247; <http://www.ucpress.edu>.

Kathy Hargrove, Ph.D.

“In My Classroom”— Reflections on Our Year in School

As I write this column, the end of the school year is almost here. For me, another graduation is approaching, with hoods to be presented and degrees to be awarded. For my students, it's time to finish up state testing and plan for end-of-the-year field trips and parties, so it is a challenge to keep active young people engaged and learning. At the end of the semester, I decided to join my students in reflecting on what the year has brought us in both joys and in challenges.

With that in mind, I took a few minutes of one of the last class meetings to ask the students in the introductory gifted education course to think about the last few months “in the classroom”—their own classrooms and the one we shared. I don't know exactly what I expected—perhaps complaints about the heavy loads of reading and writing I had demanded, or griping about colleagues or principals. I thought they might chide me for being too demanding. But I was surprised!

First of all, I need to describe the heterogeneity of the group. One is a coach of the university's varsity sports team. There is a first-year orchestra teacher in a high-achieving suburban district. Three of them are in a master's degree with certification program and are not yet teaching. One young woman is teaching an ever-changing group of children from kindergarten through high school in a women's shelter. Another one is the mother of a highly gifted fourth grader in an urban district that has managed to hang on to a very strong gifted program. Three of the teachers come from one of the wealthiest and high-

est achieving school districts in the state. From inner city, suburban, and private schools, their teaching assignments range from kindergarten to bilingual to administration in a highly rated private school. They teach in self-contained elementary heterogeneous classrooms, in a middle school art program, and in an AP Spanish classroom. One teaches in a magnet school and another in a private school. I started this activity with a list of questions that I hoped would start them thinking, reacting, and talking openly with me and with each other. As we talked, I asked them to recall their students, the leadership on their campuses, and the pressures of the school year.

When I mentioned “pressures,” the pressure valve popped and the pressure escaped! They reacted strongly to the opportunity to share their stresses. One teacher commented how difficult it was to complete the entire curriculum while realizing he must make strategic choices. My brand-new orchestra teacher mentioned the stress of preparing for the many competitions in a district known for outstanding music programs, adjusting to learning new strategies, and living up to the expectations of being in a high-achieving district. Several others spoke about working with students who were “losing focus” after spring break. One student said, “I want to differentiate instruction for diverse learners, but it is *so hard!*” Another teacher felt pressure from parents who expected high grades from their children and had trouble explaining that it was learning, not grades, that school was all about. As an experienced teacher myself, I could identify with these pressures.

But, surprisingly, their reflections were more about their school leaders than about themselves. For example,

We have a new principal this year who has breathed new life into our school. It's amazing how inspiring great leadership can be! He has caused me to want to challenge myself more and continue improving my craft because—not because I have been told to, but because I want to.

Another teacher said, “Our leadership has done so much to remove the testing pressure from our students. The kids still feel it, but so much less—good, since pressure makes kids so ‘crazy.’” One of the middle school teachers has a very demanding schedule, moving from pull-out GT classes, to send-in assignments, to teaching regular science. She said that “the supportive staff has helped us build a safe community for our students and given me freedom to teach as I want and know is best.” However, the class was horrified to hear from one teacher whose principal is afraid the school will be reconstituted because of low test scores. “If I go down,” she told her faculty, “you’ll all go down with me. You won’t have a job next year.” The class was full of advice for her about what she should do to combat the “fear factor” and to be a support to her colleagues. Clearly, it matters what kind of leadership a school has!

Then we moved into discussing the work we have done together in class, talking about how what we have learned and discussed meshes

with the “real world” of teaching. Because my next class activity was going to be a review of the state standards for gifted educators, I wanted

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to get them to remember our learning activities and what I had hoped they would learn. I wasn't disappointed! “I have learned so much about how to identify gifted children and even more, how to view students as individuals with different needs. Along with this, I find I'm reacting to my student differently.” The idea of gaining confidence in working with gifted children was a predominant theme: “I feel my new knowledge is a strong support,” “I see my students differ-

ently now,” “What I've learned puts things in perspective—I see how the gifted program supports the regular program as well as serves gifted children,” “Now I can support identification decisions, even the difficult ones,” and “I've gotten help in addressing the needs of my high-performing, though not gifted, children.” Most, although not all, of the students felt that their district's or school's gifted program was strong, although several of the teachers in the large urban district “rolled their eyes” when they talked about lack of program supervision, little evaluation, and lack of expertise of the gifted specialist in their school. “I know more than she does now,” one remarked. Sadly, one bilingual teacher commented that the specialist “doesn't see giftedness as I do—she wants to look only at a test score, not at the big picture.”

What was intended to be only a short activity and an opportunity to link our university classroom with a network of classrooms across our area turned into an opportunity to share significant ideas about teaching the gifted. For me, it was encouraging to hear how positive they were—about themselves, the leadership in their schools, their experiences in our class, and most of all, the children “in the classroom.” I'll take time for this activity next semester as well! **GCT**

Author's Note

Thanks to all the teachers who assisted in this column with their insights: Kristen C., Dominique D., Angelic H., Jeff H., Megan H., Natalie M., Casey M., Megan P., Abby R., Allison W., Deborah Z., Hannah H., and Emileo H.

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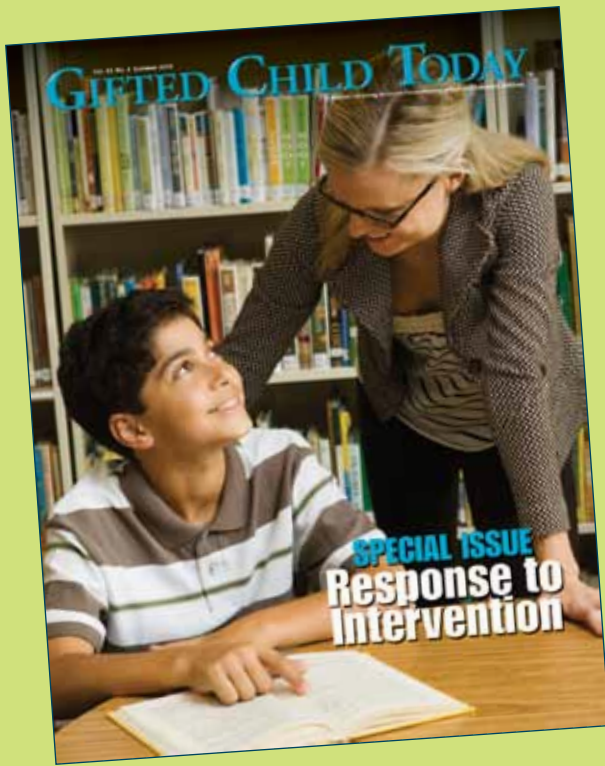
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